



*Friends' Experiences and Sense-Making of  
Providing Support for a Socially Anxious Young Person:  
An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*

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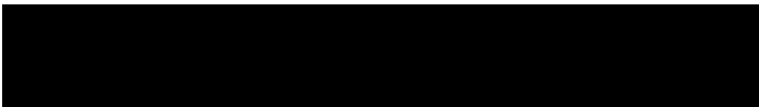
University of Chester

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## **Declaration page**

*This work is original and has not been submitted in relation to any other degree or qualification.*

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature and date of the MSc student.

Signature of MSc Student and date

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr Hannah Heath, of the Psychology Department at University of Chester for significant contribution to this research. She has let this work be my own but always guided me in the right direction, and she has always offered her constructive comments, help and feedback whenever needed.

I would also like to thank the second reviewer of this dissertation for their time.



## **Supervisor Log**

### **Meeting with Dr Hannah Heath, January 22, 2016:**

In this first meeting with my supervisor, I presented my thoughts and ideas on the research; I wanted to conduct a study of friends' experiences of providing support for someone socially anxious. Previously, we had briefly talked about focusing on anorexia nervosa or depression.

Afterwards we discussed pros and cons of different relevant methods. Hannah introduced IPA, which we discussed in comparison to thematic analysis. For example, we talked about the sample sizes for each method; five or six participants for an IPA study and ten to fifteen for a thematic analysis. We also looked at how IPA would focus on experiences and sense making, and thematic analysis would look at how participants understand or construct providing support. After this discussion, I was keen on using IPA and Hannah recommended Smith, Flowers, and Larkin's book on IPA for further reading.

We arranged that I should aim for handing in an ethics form for the first committee meeting. Therefore, I should send my first draft of the ethics form to Hannah on February 1<sup>st</sup> and that we met on February 5<sup>th</sup> to talk about her feedback. In relation to this, we discussed which contingency plan I could write on the form. Hannah suggested I could widen the research by recruiting through Facebook if posters did not work. We also talked about the literary review for the ethics form, which should build an argument for my dissertation, and focus on how friends have been considered before and where their experiences have been looked at before. Last, we discussed an expected time frame to include in the ethics form: February – May: Data collection; May – June/July: Analysis; July – October: Write up.

**Meeting with Dr Hannah Heath, February 3rd, 2016:**

After having rescheduled the meeting, Hannah and I met to talk about her feedback on my ethics form. Her feedback was focused on the things I had already written but also helping me fill in the gaps where I had been unsure of what to write. A list of points that we discussed during this meeting follows: how to recruit participants via posters, when participants should be able to withdraw, recordings of the interviews, anonymity of participants, content of the consent form and participant information sheet, shaping the interview schedule and what to write on the posters. We arranged that I would send the ethics form back to her again once I had corrected the necessary things and then hand it in.

**Meeting with Dr Hannah Heath, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016:**

In this meeting, we discussed the amendments suggested to the ethics form by Hannah and the second committee reviewer. We discussed practicalities for handing in the amendment form; once I had responded to the feedback I should only submit the amendment form. List of points we discussed are listed: withdrawal, contingency plan, consent form, interview schedule, social media messages, and friends being diagnosed or self-diagnosed with social anxiety.

**Skype Meeting with Dr Hannah Heath, July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016:**

During a Skype meeting, we discussed how I should start writing up the research. Hannah suggested that I started by doing a timeline, setting deadlines for myself. Then started writing methods, as they were very straight forward; write down all details and the process of analysis, detailed enough for someone else to redo it, method should be transparent. Also mention participants, recruitment, and collection, basically saying what I did. Afterwards, I

could move onto the methodology as a more general approach. I should incorporate social constructionism, address epistemological, ontological and theoretical decisions. We discussed epistemology and ontology: Epistemology in this research is different because we have approached it in a social constructionist manner. Theoretical decisions and ontology is wrapped up in your IPA. Then the analysis, which I could follow the steps within IPA, what do you do at each stage of the analysis, justify why you do what you do.

As one participant had cancelled the last and sixth interview, I asked Hannah for how to justify only having five participants. She recommended that I looked for studies within my field of social anxiety or studies interviewing students about experiences to see if they have used five interviews. Justify by referencing to general IPA studies using only five, and specific IPA studies (on friendship, students, social anxiety) which have only used five.

Last, Hannah then recommended references for IPA studies and social constructionism.

### **Skype Meeting with Dr Hannah Heath, August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016:**

Due to technical difficulties with Skype, this meeting was cut short. Since the last meeting, I had developed a timeline and written my methodology, which Hannah gave feedback on in this meeting. We went through Hannah's comments and feedback on my method. We talked about that I needed to justify my methods; why I had chosen IPA, interviews and qualitative methods. We spoke briefly about my method of analysis, which Hannah was happy with, and which I had not yet written in the method section, as I had only just begun reading and re-reading transcripts, taking notes, when this meeting took place. We agreed that I would send her sections of the analysis in the following week.

**Phone meeting with Dr Hannah Heath, September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016:**

During this meeting, we went through Hannah's comments and feedback on the first draft of the analysis. We discussed the length of the analysis, relevant parts of the analysis to focus on, and also scheduled the full draft for between September 28-30<sup>th</sup>. Hannah advised to include a reflection in the appendix to show how I have involved myself in the process of conducting and writing the dissertation.

**Meeting with Dr Hannah Heath, October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016:**

During this meeting, we talked about Hannah's comments and feedback on my discussion, limitations and recommendations for future research. We also met up so Hannah could sign this supervisor log.

Hannah Heath . 6/10/16.

Supervisor signature and date

[Redacted signature and date]

Student signature and date

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## Abstract

This study investigates how friends experience and make sense of providing support for a socially anxious young person. The experiences of friends who provide support for people with mental illnesses are rarely studied in their own right; studies tend to group friends with the experiences of partners or parents. This study aimed at analysing the overlooked perspective of the friends. Friends' experiences were attained through semi-structured interviews with five self-identified friends of a young person with social anxiety. Through an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, three super-ordinate themes were generated: *experiencing responsibility*, *the challenges in providing support*, and *the meaning of providing support*. The analysis demonstrated that friends are a great source of support for socially anxious young people. Participants experienced a great responsibility because the socially anxious friends were dependent upon the support provided. Providing support was challenging; participants dealt with self-blame, worries about providing the right support and being a good supporter. However, participants valued their friendships, and providing support was also linked to feelings of reward, pride, success and achievement. The discussion indicated that great responsibility and dependency is commonly experienced among carers of people with mental illnesses, and that friends could benefit from sharing the responsibility with more people to reduce the challenges associated with providing support. Future research was recommended to examine the consequences of providing support alone versus in a group, and engage with the self-blame experienced among friends providing support. Last, more qualitative research on the experiences of friends was recommended for future studies.

## **Introduction**

The present study is an interpretative phenomenological research that wishes to investigate how friends experience and make sense of providing support for a young person with social anxiety. It examines the subjective, lived experiences of young people in a friendship with someone clinically diagnosed or self-diagnosed with social anxiety. The research aims at understanding how young people experience providing support and what meaning they ascribe to it. This study also aims at broadening the research on the experiences of friends in general as very little research has studied the experiences of friends in their own right. Therefore, the present study takes the perspective of the friends and examines what it is like to be a provider of support in the specific relation of a friendship. First, an overview of the relevant literature on the subject of friends and social anxiety is provided.

### **Social Anxiety and Friendship**

The statistics of mental health problems and the development of social anxiety in the UK speak for itself; 1 in 4 people are expected to experience a mental health problem in their lifetime (Mental Health Foundation, 2015). In total, 8.2 million cases of anxiety were reported in the UK in 2013, with women being twice as likely to develop anxiety disorders than men (Mental Health Foundation, 2015). To experience nervousness and shyness is common in most people but those suffering from social anxiety experience these feelings more often and more intensely (NHS, 2015). It is in social situations, such as speaking in public, meeting new people or talking on the phone, that these feelings may occur (Moodjuice; NHS, 2015). Socially anxious people are highly self-conscious, fear humiliation as well as embarrassment and negative evaluation from others, and have intrusive and worrying thoughts about or during social situations (APA; NHS, 2015). Severe social anxiety can affect



people's everyday lives and make them avoid specific social situations that may cause and provoke the anxiety (Moodjuice; NHS, 2015). Socially anxious people generally have a negative self-concept; they perceive themselves as less socially competent, accepted, and attractive, and as having a lower self-esteem than others (Delgado, Inglés, & García-Fernández, 2013; Moscovitch, Orr, Rowa, Reimer, & Antony, 2009; Rapee & Lim, 1992; Smari, Petursdottir, & Porsteinsdottir, 2001; Uhrlass, Schofield, Coles, & Gibb, 2009).

Friends and close positive friendships have been proven to be important in preventing the development of mental health issues, such as social anxiety, in children, adolescents and young people. Children and adolescents who have less positive relations to peers and friends generally experience a higher level of social anxiety (Festa & Ginsburg, 2011; Erath, Flanagan, & Bierman, 2007). For children, distress and fear of negative evaluation and criticism is a consequence of not feeling accepted, heard or understood by peers (Festa & Ginsburg, 2011), and social anxiety can be provoked by such negative experiences with peers (La Greca & Harrison, 2005). Similar findings are seen in adolescent friendships where conflict, pressure and exclusion have been proven to cause higher levels of anxiety and depression, whereas self-esteem, intimacy, empathy and support can develop in close friendships with positive qualities (La Greca & Harrison, 2005). Thus, close and positive friendships are essential for children, adolescents and young people in preventing social anxiety.

For young people who are already coping with social anxiety, close friends have been proven to be a major source of beneficial support, and it is these friendships that prohibit socially anxious youths from experiencing further psychosocial maladjustments, such as loneliness or peer victimization (Erath, Flanagan, Bierman, & Tu, 2010). Research carried out on the benefits of close friends has found that friends enable and encourage socially

anxious people to open up and self-disclose more information to others (van Zalk & van Zalk, 2015). Self-disclosure is an essential ability in socialising and making friends (Voncken & Dijk, 2013), which socially anxious people often find anxiety provoking, as they fear humiliation and negative evaluation. Thus, the presence of a close and trusted friend can make them feel safe and less anxious, so that they feel more comfortable in disclosing more about themselves in conversation with strangers (Pontari & Glenn, 2012). Thus, friends can build up the social competence of socially anxious friends by generating less social distance between them and others (van Zalk & van Zalk, 2015).

The relationship between social anxiety and friendship quality has been largely researched. Research has found that socially anxious people report lower and more impaired friendship quality than their non-socially anxious friends, possibly due to their more negative self-perception (Davila & Beck, 2002; Eng & Heimberg, 2006; Fernandez & Rodebaugh, 2011; Rodebaugh, 2009; Rodebaugh et al., 2014). Especially the youngest participants or participants in the newest friendships reported social anxiety as affecting the friendship negatively, which indicates that long-term friendships might reduce social anxiety (Rodebaugh et al., 2014). A study by Rodebaugh, Lim, Shumaker, Levinson, and Thompson (2015) found that even high social anxiety does not impair friendship quality, rather, friendship quality predicts social anxiety. The study found that high friendship quality predicted a decrease in social anxiety measured over a period of six months, thus, socially anxious people became less anxious over time when in a friendship (Rodebaugh, Lim, Shumaker, Levinson, & Thompson, 2015). These studies were based on friendships between socially and non-socially anxious people. A study by van Zalk, van Zalk, Kerr, and Stattin (2011) studied friendships with young people with the same anxiety levels. The study found that socially anxious youths chose friends with the same level of anxiousness as themselves,

and consequently it led to increased levels of social anxiety (van Zalk, van Zalk, Kerr, & Stattin, 2011). This also worked conversely, whereby non-socially anxious youths found friends similar to them but influenced each other so they both became more socially competent (van Zalk, van Zalk, Kerr, & Stattin, 2011). Thus, the different levels of anxiety of the individuals in a friendship can decrease or maintain social anxiety.

Previous studies have found that socially anxious people often show high levels of dependency and rely upon close relationships with friends, family and romantic partners for support (Darcy, Davila, & Beck, 2005; Davila & Beck, 2002; Iancu, Bodner, & Ben-Zion, 2015; Nielsen & Cairns, 2009). As an example, young informal carers who provide support and care for a relative or friend with a mental or physical illness, experience this dependency. Studies have found that the young informal carers experience a greater responsibility than their peers and friends, and also concluded that young informal carers are an overlooked group in society in need of support themselves (Ali, Ahlström, Krevers, Sjöström, & Skärsäter, 2013; Ali, Krevers, Sjöström, & Skärsäter, 2014).

As people with social anxiety, according to these studies, become less anxious when in the company of a close friend and rely upon their support, social support and close friendships seems essential in coping with social anxiety. As the previous studies also demonstrated that carers often experience a great responsibility, this research takes its starting point in the experiences of friends who provide support for a socially anxious young person to understand how they experience and make sense of this providing support.

### **The Study of Friends' Experiences**

In general, the experiences of friends as providers of support for young people with mental or physical health issues have largely been grouped with the experiences of

either relatives or partners, e.g. Hill, Shepherd and Hardy (1998), Hughes, Locock, and Ziebland, (2013) and van Zalk and van Zalk (2015). Thus, the experiences of friends have rarely been studied in their own right. As parents, partners and friends are three very diverse roles and sources of social support, it seems only fair that they get separate attention.

The majority of the studies, which have focused on social anxiety and friendships, have previously examined how close friendships are understood and experienced by socially anxious people (Nielsen & Cairns, 2009; Schneider & Tessier, 2007). A smaller part of the research has engaged with the friends' perspective of the friendship. Apart from Rodebaugh's (2009) study mentioned above, which demonstrated how friends perceive friendship quality differently than their socially anxious friend, the perspective of friends has been researched in relation to the peer's understanding of their socially anxious friends. Erath, Flanagan, & Bierman, (2007) studied self and peer perspectives of social anxiety. The study found that social anxiety was linked with poor relations to peers, such that the socially anxious youths were less accepted by peers and experienced more victimization than non-socially anxious peers (Erath, Flangan, & Bierman, 2007). Miers, Blöte, & Westenberg (2010) studied peer perception of socially anxious adolescents' social skills. They found that peers experienced highly socially anxious individuals to have poorer social skills than low socially anxious individuals (Miers, Blöte, & Westenberg, 2010). These studies focus on the non-socially anxious person's perception of their friends whereas Schneider and Tessier (2007) recommended that research should also be carried out on how non-socially anxious people experience and understand a friendship with a socially anxious person. Thus, there seems to exist a gap in the research on friends' experiences in their own right, which the current research wishes to address.

The studies of friendships between a socially anxious and a non-socially anxious person have most commonly made use of quantitative methods (e.g. Rodebaugh et al., 2014). Thus, there has been very little research on the subjective experiences of a friend of someone socially anxious. As this research aims at gaining an insight into the individual's experiences and sense making of providing support, the method applied is qualitative semi-structured interviews. Thus, it contributes to the research within the field of social anxiety, friendships and the experiences of friends with a qualitative approach and methodology.

The aim of this research is to study the experiences of friends providing support for a socially anxious young person. It wishes to study the experiences of friends in their own right and apply a qualitative method and approach to a field lead by quantitative research. It wishes to bring new perspectives, knowledge and research onto the field.

## **Methodology**

In conducting a research that examines the experiences of individuals who provide support for a socially anxious friend, an interpretative phenomenological approach, method and analysis was applied. This chapter will present Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and its ontological and epistemological underpinnings; the method of recruiting and collecting data; and the method of analysis applied.

### **Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is a qualitative approach concerned with and interested in studying the lifeworld and lived experiences of people (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). IPA is particularly interested in *how* people make sense of their lived experiences, especially those that are ascribed certain meaning or significance in a person's

life (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Therefore, IPA is often applied in qualitative research studying major life changes (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). In psychology, IPA started within health psychology where the main areas of research concern illness experiences and mental health issues (Smith, 2011).

IPA is founded on key concepts from phenomenology, hermeneutics and ideography. It is *phenomenological* in that it studies lived experiences with particular importance to the individual, and that it attempts to examine each experience in its own right without any pre-set assumptions (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). The concept of phenomenological reduction, developed by phenomenological philosopher, Husserl, indicates that the researcher can go back to the things themselves by bracketing their own preconceptions of the phenomenon examined, which may impede the understanding of the phenomenon (Larkin, Eatough, & Osborn, 2011). Husserl also argued that it is only possible to examine our experiences in their own right if we disengage from our taken-for-granted everyday life and routines, and become aware of the particular experience (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). When we become aware or conscious of a certain experience, we begin to reflect upon it in order to make sense of it (Giorgi, 1997; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). It is in this reflection that “we have the beginnings of what can be described as ‘an experience’ as opposed to just experience” (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 2). The philosopher, Heidegger, argued that it is not possible to share someone else’s experience entirely – *their* experience belongs to *their* embodied perspective of the world, whereas *my* experience belongs to *my* embodied perspective of the world (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). As the researcher is never able to perceive the experience exactly like the participant, it is a person’s sense-making of an experience that represents the experience itself within IPA (Giorgi, 1997; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). This implies that the

researcher only has access to what the participant chooses to share (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). To get as close as possible to the lived experiences of others, IPA researchers engage in conversation with people and this is most often attained through interviews (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). The experience can be understood by studying the meaning which people attach to it (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009), which involves the hermeneutics of IPA as will be explained later.

Another important aspect of phenomenology is Husserl's concept of intentionality. Intentionality indicates consciousness, and consciousness is always directed towards an object; we are conscious *of* something (Giorgi, 1997), our being is always in-relation-to something (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). As Giorgi (1997) states "to be in a state of desire implies that something is desired, or that to know means that one knows something" (p. 237). There is an intentional relationship between the subject and the object (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009); they are never two independent entities (Giorgi, 1997) as we are people-in-context who cannot be detached from the world and the objects, whether that would be physical objects or reflective acts (Giorgi, 1997; Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Heidegger's concept of intersubjectivity implies that this relatedness to the world is a fundamental part of being a human being (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). IPA does not study the nature of an object but rather a person's *experience* of that object (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006).

The phenomenological aspect of IPA discloses meaning in people's experiences, whereas the *hermeneutic* aspect aims at interpreting this meaning (Bäckström & Sundin, 2007; Smith, 2011). The researcher has a central role as analyst and interpreter and without interpretation the meaning of the experiences may not be wholly discovered (Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty, & Hendry, 2011). Within IPA, the interpretation process is iterative,

circular and employs a double hermeneutic. The process of interpretation is constantly moving between the part and the whole of the research in a hermeneutic circle (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). The part and the whole are inevitably dependent on each other; one cannot be understood without the other (Smith, 2007). The researcher starts out in the circle with their own preconceptions and experiences, which must be acknowledged before engaging in an interview with a participant (Smith, 2007). During the interview, the focus shifts from the 'whole' to the 'part'; from the researcher to the participants' experiences and stories, and after the interview, the researcher returns home to where they began in the circle (Smith, 2007). The researcher still has their own preconceptions and experiences but the 'part', the encounter with the participant, has changed the researcher and thus, changed the 'whole' by bringing new experiences, accounts and insights into the research (Smith, 2007). As Smith (2007) points out "the final interpretation may never be reached as the circle could theoretically go on forever" (p. 5), so deciding when the interpretation is saturated is the individual researcher's decision. Engaging in analysis of the individual cases, "the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense" (Smith, 2011, p. 10), which is what makes IPA a double hermeneutic. Furthermore, IPA has an important empathic aspect as the researcher aims at perceiving the world from the perspective of the participant, while also questioning the data by trying to view, examine and interpret the experience from a different angle than the participant (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). The interpretation is expected to surpass the account of the participant, as it offers an alternative perspective of the account (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). However, an important thing to keep in mind is that this does not mean that the researcher's interpretation is truer than the account of the participant, just that it offers a different perspective (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).



As opposed to most psychological research, IPA is not concerned with facilitating generalisations of larger groups or populations (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). It is *ideographic*, thus, it is concerned with the particular through in-depth analysis of participants' accounts, and by understanding how particular experiences are understood by particular people in their particular context (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). As will be explained later in the *Method of Analysis*, IPA is able to find both shared emergent themes across cases and individual themes for each particular case, as it examines each case carefully before analysing convergence and divergence between cases (Smith, 2004; Smith, 2011).

A qualitative approach was chosen for the present study because it wished to investigate the meaning of experiences (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). As opposed to a quantitative approach's focus on examining one variable's effect on another, often obtained through statistical analyses or experiments (Lakshman, Sinha, Biswas, Charles, & Arora, 2000). This study aimed at being able to explore more than what happens between two events (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009) and instead be able to ask the "how" and "why" to the narratives presented by participants (Lakshman, Sinha, Biswas, Charles, & Arora, 2000). It wished to engage with participants' experiences more than just numerically (Lakshman, Sinha, Biswas, Charles, & Arora, 2000). Within the broad range of qualitative methods, IPA was chosen as it allows the researcher to explore the meaning attached to a certain experience (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). As opposed to qualitative methods such as discourse analysis, which focuses on participants' use of discourses and language in order to understand how these shape identities (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). As this research aims at understanding the meaning and sense-making of providing support for a socially anxious friend, IPA's focus on meaning was the main reason for choosing this approach. As meaning is best derived from asking the people who have experienced the particular experience of

interest, interviews were considered an appropriate method as opposed to more quantitative methods, such as questionnaires, which would not give the same depth and insight into the meaning attached to certain experiences.

### **Ontological and Epistemological Decisions of the Research**

In IPA, reality is created through the subjective experiences that people encounter in their lives. However, reality does not just consist of the experiences themselves but also of how people give meaning to and make sense of them through reflection and narration of their stories (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). IPA researchers aim at describing and understanding this meaning through interpretation of people's reports (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). The world is thus a process of co-construction (McLeod, 2011) between participants making sense of an experience and the researcher making sense of the participants' account.

Within an IPA approach, reality is accessed in conversation with people who have experienced particular experiences, which the researcher is interested in (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Knowledge is gained through people's reflection upon their experiences and the researcher's interpretation of these experiences (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Thus, knowledge is acknowledged as constructed in the social processes between people, particularly in the use of language, which constructs and reproduces social concepts, categories and cultural meanings (Burr, 2015; McLeod, 2011). Reality is considered relative and subjective (Burr, 2015) to both the individual and their story and the researcher interpreting the story. No knowledge or version of reality is considered truer than others (Burr, 2015). Thus, the present study's epistemological decisions are underpinned by social constructionism.

## **Research Sample**

As IPA is idiographic, a smaller sample size is recommended for studies using this approach (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). IPA aims at analysing a small number of cases thoroughly to be able to give detailed accounts of participants' experiences, and studies with larger sample sizes have shown to produce less satisfying interpretative work (Smith, 2011). Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) recommend between 3-6 participants for studies by Master students. For the present study, five participants constituted the sample size, which has been deemed before as an adequate number of participants in IPA researches on students' experiences (Cameron, 2016; Conroy & de Visser, 2015; Liu & Winder, 2014; Patel, Tarrant, Bonas, & Shaw, 2015) and in IPA studies in general (Eatough, Smith, & Shaw, 2008; Hunt & Smith, 2004; Parys, Smith, & Rober, 2014).

In the present study, five participants took part; three males and two females. Participants were between the ages of 21-25 and students at a university in the North West region of England. To obtain a reasonably homogenous sample size, as recommended for IPA studies (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2009), the inclusion criterion for participating in the study was that participants self-identified as a friend of someone socially anxious for whom they provided support. This indicated, firstly, that the friends of the participants were either self-identified or clinically diagnosed with social anxiety; secondly, that the socially anxious person was a friend and not a relative or acquaintance of the participant, as the study aimed at exploring social anxiety in a particular kind of relation, that of friendship; and thirdly; that participants should be in a position where he or she was or had been providing significant support for their friend. Furthermore, recruitment was purposely undertaken at the university to recruit young persons and get a fairly homogeneous age-range of participants (18-25 years of age).

## **Data Collection**

Participants were recruited through posters (Appendix A) put up at a campus of a university in the North West region of England. The posters requested participants to contact the researcher through email if they identified as being in a friendship with someone socially anxious for whom they provided support, and if they were interested in sharing their experiences of being in this friendship in an individual, private interview. Four participants contacted the researcher through the posters, either through email or by direct contact; the fifth participant was recruited through a friend of the researcher. Participants were sent an information sheet (Appendix B) and consent form (Appendix C) when contacting the researcher so they could familiarize themselves with the study and to consider any questions they may wish to ask. If they wished to partake in the study, an interview was scheduled. The information sheet also informed participants that withdrawal was possible up until the end of the interview and that interviews would be audio recorded with the purpose of transcribing them later. Four interviews were carried out at the university; the fifth interview was carried out in the researcher's home, as the participant was an acquaintance of the researcher. Written consent was obtained before each interview.

IPA requires detailed accounts and insights into people's subjective, lived experiences, as well as feelings and thoughts towards these experiences (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). To obtain such insight, a method that allows participants to talk as widely and freely as possible about their experiences is preferred (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). For the present study, data was collected through semi-structured interviews, where the interview is viewed as an interaction (Osborn & Smith, 2006; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). This approach was chosen to allow participants to share their stories and allow the researcher to probe participants on important, unanticipated individual topics that may arise

(Osborn & Smith, 2006). As Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) remark, unexpected turns in interviews are of great value to the research as they show what is important to the participants, and show the researcher something new that he or she needed to know about the topic.

The interviews were based around an interview schedule with relevant questions and possible prompts regarding the topic (Appendix D). The schedule was developed to cover specific topics during the interview and as a guide for the researcher. The interview schedule was shaped into four main areas; introductory questions, friendships, providing support and closing questions. Introductory questions were added so that participants were first able to talk a bit about themselves. This approach was chosen to ease participants into the conversation by talking about less serious issues before engaging in the reflections, thoughts and feelings on a more serious subject matter. As presented in the introduction, the literature on social anxiety and friendship indicates that close friends are a major source of support for socially anxious people (Erath, Flanagan, Bierman, & Tu, 2010). Therefore, questions regarding the friendship were included to get insight into the type of friendship participants' experienced with the socially anxious young person. Friendship questions were:

*Could you tell me about how you became friends with your friend who has social anxiety?*

*Can you tell me about what place the anxiety has in your friendship at the moment?*

*Can you tell me how you experience being in a friendship with someone socially anxious?*

The social support received from friends has been proven to have significant impact on a socially anxious young person's wellbeing, however, little research has investigated how

friends experience providing support. Therefore, these questions were asked to gain an understanding of how friends experienced and felt about providing support:

*Can you describe an experience where you provided support for your friend?*

*Can you tell me about how you experience providing support?*

Most of the questions were purposely designed to be descriptive, like the questions presented above. In practice, such descriptive questions proved useful as participants could return to the example several times during the interview and, in general, these descriptive questions provided deeper and more detailed insights and reflections from participants. Prompts were developed for each question so that the researcher could prompt participants if they gave short replies or did not understand a question (Smith & Osborn, 2009). The schedule was used whenever it seemed appropriate, and often the questions were not asked in the anticipated order, and participants brought up unexpected topics, which the interviewer pursued.

Interviews were conducted from May to July 2016 and each interview lasted between 35-70 minutes. All interviews were transcribed verbatim in accordance with IPA (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Some non-verbal utterances, like laughter or longer pauses, were noted in brackets if they were significant, but small-talk in the beginning and the end of each interview, such as saying hello and goodbye, were left out as they were not considered relevant for the analysis (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

## **Ethical Considerations**

The Ethics Committee of the Psychology Department at the University of Chester gave ethical approval for this research (Appendix E & F). The research followed the British Psychological Society guidelines. Confidentiality was secured by giving participants

pseudonyms and extracting sensitive private data from the transcriptions, such as names and locations (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

## **Method of Analysis**

Interview transcripts were analysed in accordance with the principles of IPA as presented by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009). The analysis is an outcome of the double hermeneutic within IPA, thus, a product created by the participant and the analyst together as “the end result is always an account of how the analyst thinks the participant is thinking” (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 80).

The first step of the analysis was reading and re-reading each case carefully and thoroughly to become familiar with it; to get an overview of the structure and the individual sections (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Before engaging with the transcripts, the researcher bracketed off experiences and reflections of the interview by noting them down, which should help put ideas and connections aside until later (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

The second step in the analysis is an initial noting of everything of interest in a “free text analysis” (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Through exploratory notes, descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments emerged from the reading of the transcripts (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Descriptive notes were used to describe the explicit content of the text and highlight what was important to participants (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Linguistic notes commented on the participants’ use of language, such as repetitions, pauses, laughter, metaphors and emphasis on specific words (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). The conceptual notes were more interpretative as they aimed at investigating the overall understanding and meaning of the participants’ explicit claims, thus, exploring why the

participant had certain concerns or thoughts about an experience by using more abstract concepts to make sense of their account (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Practically, notes were taken on hard copies of the transcripts. Comments were written in the right margin of the transcript to leave room for emergent themes in the left margin as recommended by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) (Appendix G).

The third step of the analysis included reducing the exploratory notes into more overall emergent themes, which captured the complexity of the participant's account but also the interpretation of the researcher (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Every emergent theme was written into a document chronologically as they occurred in the transcript, leading to the fourth step of the analysis where connections between emergent themes within each case were drawn. Super-ordinate themes were created using abstraction, which meant that a newly created super-ordinate theme emerged from drawing themes together, or using subsumption, where an emergent theme became a super-ordinate theme with other emergent themes grouped under it (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). A graphic representation with lines and key words was created to give an overview of super-ordinate and subthemes within each case (Appendix H) (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

In the fifth step of analysis, the researcher moved on to the next case and analysed it in its own terms by bracketing preconceptions about the second case but also themes and comments emerged from the first case (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

In the sixth step of the analysis, the researcher drew together super-ordinate and emergent themes from all the five cases to look for connections between the cases. A reflection was generated to demonstrate how the choice and interpretation of themes was also influenced by the researcher's position and experience (Appendix I). Practically, drawing themes together was done by printing out all graphic representations of the five transcripts,



spreading them out on a table and looking for similarities and differences. Quotes and extracts from transcripts were found to represent the themes and collected in individual word documents. A helpful tool in this step was to create a graphic table for all the themes of the cases combined with quotes, key words, and lines (Appendix J) (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). This table was created before the analysis as a way of structuring the writing process. However, during the process of writing the analysis, the structure changed due to unforeseen and interesting topics emerging. Thus, the table represents the first draft for themes in the analysis but not the final product and themes of the analysis. When selecting themes, the researcher looked for similarities and connections but also highlighted unique details within the individual case (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

## **Analysis**

Through an in-depth Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of five interviews with self-identified friends of a young person with social anxiety, three super-ordinate themes and their subsequent subthemes were generated. Presenting and explaining the themes, the analysis illustrates the “breadth and complexity” (Eatough, Smith, & Shaw, 2008, p. 1776) of the experience and sense-making of providing support for a socially anxious friend. The super-ordinate themes were: *experiencing responsibility*, *the challenges in providing support*, and *the meaning of providing support*

### **Experiencing Responsibility**

The first section of the analysis will engage with the feelings and experiences of responsibility that emerged in participants’ narratives about providing support.

Responsibility was expressed in relation to being the primary source of support and experiencing the dependency of the socially anxious friend.

***Feeling responsible.***

Feelings of responsibility towards the socially anxious friend were a continuous experience in four of the five participants' narratives. Two participants had similar experiences of responsibility in that they both experienced having to change their behaviour when their friend became anxious:

... I feel like I can't let myself like panic too much or like completely break down in front of her because that would just make the situation worse, so I kind of have to ... gain confidence and go for it and be encouraging and positive as much as I can.... (Sabrina, p. 9, l. 273-277)

Sabrina talked about having a responsibility that required that she adjust her behaviour by upholding a positive outlook, and not panicking. In doing so, she presented herself as having strength and confidence, in order to ensure the wellbeing of her friend.

Mike's thoughts on experiencing his socially anxious friend having a panic attack was similar to Sabrina's as he had to override his own feelings of fear in order to help his friend overcome hers:

... obviously I'm not going to show that I'm scared because that would just make her feel as if being scared is justified, you know, if I'm getting scared about it then she's just going to get even more scared... (Mike, p. 8, l. 253-256)

These quotes suggest that both Sabrina and Mike feel that they must prioritise the feelings of their socially anxious friend over their own feelings. Sabrina and Mike, thus, take on responsibilities, which are not typically the responsibilities of a friend. Taylor's experience of responsibility sheds light on the type of responsibility Sabrina and Mike experienced; Taylor regards the relation to his socially anxious friend as more of a relationship to a younger family member than a friend. The responsibility thus becomes greater but also becomes an obligation for all three participants. Taylor explained how he experienced feeling responsible for a younger sibling rather than a friend:

... sometimes you have to be there for them just like they were your young, your younger brother or younger sister, so it's really different, you feel like you, there's a word for it, you're responsible for them, you're not responsible for your friends ... you're only responsible for your friends when they get completely wasted and they start throwing up everywhere ... it was like feeling I was responsible for her both psychologically and physically ... (Taylor, p. 23, l. 749-757)

Taylor draws a sharp distinction between liability to friends and responsibilities to family members. The difference lies in the degree of responsibility; he has to take care of a younger sibling, whereas he is not obliged to take care of friends. The responsibility Taylor experienced is no longer the responsibility of a friend but more that of an older sibling. Younger siblings should be protected and guided, and for Taylor, they are also entitled to an emotional support, which his friends are not benefitting from. A sibling-relationship is permanent throughout life, whereas friends are a choice and are not necessarily and

consistently a part of life. Thus, to compare the friendship to a sibling relationship proclaims Taylor greater and continuing responsibility to his socially anxious friend than to other friends. It also gives him feelings of obligation towards his friend; he is positioning himself strongly in the role as responsible provider of support.

Ann also experienced a responsibility, which resembled that of a family member more than of a friend. For Ann, responsibility was related to emotional support but also to sorting things out for her friend, for example phoning people: "I've always kind of looked after her in that aspect and I'll go and talk to people and phone people for her" (Ann, p. 2. 41-42). The type of support Ann provided for her friend was more practical. Taylor also exclaimed helping his socially anxious friend out with grocery shopping whenever she was too anxious to leave her home. This type of support is uncommon among friends as it is practical everyday life actions, but it clearly resembled the responsibility of a family member. This indicates that social anxiety proclaims friends with a greater responsibility, which at times resembles the responsibility of a family member.

***The primary provider of support.***

For the participants, the experience of being responsible enhanced, as they often found themselves in the position of being the primary provider of support. For participants, responsibility was given to them by their socially anxious friends but as the analysis will show participants often also took on a great deal of responsibility on their own shoulders.

... I was like working and doing uni so I never really had much time to myself and then I wouldn't get any time to myself because she'd always call me and like, not madly but she'd always want to be around me. ... she's fine with that now, she doesn't like need me as much ... (Ann, p. 3, l. 86-93)

Ann describes the difficulty in balancing her own responsibilities while also being there for her friend who describes Ann as the “only real friend she’s got” (Ann, p. 3, l. 77-78). Being the primary provider of support put a lot of responsibility onto Ann’s shoulders. At the same time, Ann also takes on a lot of responsibility herself. For example, Ann talks about how she does not like talking to other friends about her socially anxious friend because she has experienced that they do not take it seriously:

... I do recognize it as like a big issue but I don’t ever want to talk to them about it ‘cause I feel like they’re not going to take it seriously enough, which isn’t fair on [her socially anxious friend]. ... I just don’t want people talking about it without understanding it so if they’re like, if they’re willing to understand it and I know that they’re genuinely going to be interested in helping her out or just having patience with it all then I’ve got no worries, like talking to them about it ... (Ann, p. 10, l. 317-328)

Ann is given a lot of responsibility but she also takes a lot of responsibility onto her shoulders by expecting that people will not be willing to understand her friend’s anxiety. Ann might want to portray herself as the only one who fully understands and is able to provide the necessary support because she then feels needed. Ann, and the support she can provide, becomes important and essential for her friend’s well-being. Also, her support makes a difference. There is a glimpse of pride and achievement in being able to provide support successfully and also being the only one who is good at it. To Ann, these feelings might be worth taking on a lot of responsibility for.

To shed light on Ann's experience and why it is important for her to feel needed, Taylor's experience can be used as reference. Taylor spoke of what he got out of providing support for his friend:

... you feel like you're need[ed], you know what I mean, even if you have, even if you're failing at your, at your degree or anything, you feel like you're making a change, yeah, for one person ... (Taylor, p. 30, l. 978-981)

Taylor described that there is success related to providing support. Though he may experience failure in other aspects of his life, providing support felt like a success because he was able to make a change and impact his friend's life for the better. Like Ann, Taylor also experienced pride and achievement in providing support. This is also a possible explanation as to why participants themselves often took on the responsibility of the primary provider of support, despite finding it difficult and challenging.

As Taylor's friend did not have anyone else to go too for support, Taylor became the primary source of support:

... she would never realize that sometimes she was asking too much ... for example when she would ask me to go shopping for her and then like call for, or stay the whole day in my room because she wasn't feeling well and she might have to go to the GP, so she would ask me to stay the whole day, like a whole for example Sunday or Saturday when you want to go out ... (Taylor, p. 14, l. 455-461)

For Taylor, being “kind of the only friend she had” (Taylor, p. 2, l. 40) meant that he experienced being overworked at times. It suggests that he felt they had to do everything on her terms so that she would not become too anxious. He thus had very little to say in the matter of how he wanted to spend his weekends, and also, Taylor took a more passive position in the friendship; doing what was best for her but not what was best for him. By doing everything on her terms, her social anxiety was stabilized but not challenged or becoming better. Rather, it suggests that it was indirectly supported and thereby maintained. However, Taylor often spoke of supporting her by challenging her, which at times seemed more effective than doing everything on her terms. Taylor, for example, challenged her by pushing her forward with encouraging words if she felt anxious about her university assignments instead of letting her wallow in the anxious feelings.

Mike became the primary provider of support for his friend out of obligation because someone had to take responsibility and his friend’s family were not capable of providing support:

It did get to be like a bit of chore, like I was thinking sometimes why, why is it my job to do this and why is it my responsibility ... all the people who are supporting her, obviously they failed to do that so just by a process of elimination I have got to do something ... (Mike, p. 16, l. 517-522)

Mike felt that in lack of social support from parents, teachers or others, all responsibility for his friend’s wellbeing was left on his shoulders. The responsibility became an obligation and was so great that he questioned whether or not it was fair that he became the primary

provider of support. This is taking into account that Mike was only fifteen years old at the time when his friend's anxiety was really severe:

... she used to skip school a lot and I used to go to her house to check on her and sometimes she wouldn't answer the door and I mean, I'm panicking, I'm fifteen years old, I don't know a thing about this and I'm thinking: 'oh God, she's like, I don't know, slit her wrists or she's killed herself' ... (Mike, p. 14, l. 433-438)

The responsibility became greater as not only her physical state but also her life was suddenly at risk. Mike's emphasis on his age suggests that he finds it unreasonable that he at the age of fifteen should shoulder that much responsibility. Mike is placing himself in a position where he does not feel able to take on the responsibility because of his young age. It also suggests that Mike was reluctant in taking on the responsibility, perhaps as he said, he did not know anything about social anxiety at the time or how to care for someone who might cause physical harm to herself. His reluctance might stem from fear of doing something wrong or not doing enough; not being able to prevent her from self-harming.

Sabrina's experience stands out as she was in a group of friends who shared the responsibility of providing support for the same socially anxious friend:

... it's always better when there are several people in case one of us makes a mistake, the other one can kind of like catch up and change the subject or whatever, so that she [socially anxious friend] doesn't feel bad ... (Sabrina, p. 18, l. 566-569)



The main point in Sabrina's extract is 'the more, the merrier'. The more people around their socially anxious friend the better chance they have of securing her wellbeing and feeling of safety. Sabrina's expression 'mistake' indicates that some behaviours or sayings are better than others when in company of her friend. Sharing the responsibility means that they can 'share the burden' in case one of them do make a mistake. This puts less weight on each individual's shoulders. Sharing responsibility can thus seem to lighten the feeling of responsibility, as Sabrina herself had support from her friends while providing support. The next section of the analysis will show how this shared responsibility also means that Sabrina's interview was the one not mentioning dependency as a consequence of providing support.

### ***Dependency.***

Being the closest friend and also the primary provider of support often meant that the socially anxious friend grew very dependent upon the participant. Participants who experienced this referred to the dependency as difficult and annoying as it often interfered with their own wants and needs.

For Ann, the dependency of her friend was sometimes described as 'intense', 'suffocating', or a feeling of 'being dragged down'.

... she'd feel very threatened by anybody else around me ... I felt like I had to revolve my life around her, just so she wouldn't kick off or she wouldn't get upset, which was quite like annoying me at the time because I was just like: I can't, like it's quite suffocating, I don't want to be dragged down ... (Ann, p. 6, l. 192-199)

Ann's friend became so dependent on Ann that spending time with other people or doing things apart became a difficulty. Feeling suffocated or dragged down are strong expressions, which suggests that Ann felt forced to do things she did not want to and that it affected her own wellbeing. Like Taylor, the time Ann spend with her friend were not on Ann's terms; instead, she compromised herself for the wellbeing of her friend. Feeling suffocated indicates that she compromised herself too much, thus, perhaps felt that she sat too few limits for how she wanted to provide support.

Simon described how he experienced his friend's dependency as annoying and boring because she came to him with the same issues again and again:

... sometimes it gets to the stage where you are like: 'how many times do you need to come to me and be anxious and say: 'oh my god, I'm scared he's [boyfriend] going to break up with me', 'cause then it just starts boring me a little bit because you're just being a pain in the backside now ... (Simon, p. 6, l. 165-169)

Simon's friend was dependent upon Simon to share her worries and anxieties regarding her relationship. Simon spoke of how dependency enhances support and support enhances dependency; being there for her meant she was dependent on him, and her dependency predicted his support. Her dependency bothered Simon as he thought a solution to the problem with her boyfriend would have been reached after discussing it continually. This suggests that Simon and his friend were caught in a circle of dependency and support.

To highlight Simon's experience, Mike's experience of a support and dependency circle can be used as reference. Mike's friend became dependent upon Mike because he

became the primary provider of support and had to talk her through every anxiety attack. As he realized how dependent she had become, he began working towards making her less dependent: "Otherwise it would just be her depending on me and the moment I wasn't there she would be back to having a panic attack again, it would just be completely useless" (Mike, p. 9, l. 266-268). Mike described how responsibility and dependency go together; the responsibility he had taken in order to make her feel better had made her dependent, and her dependency had given him great responsibility towards her. It was this circle of support and dependency that Mike realized did neither of them any good, as it did not promote her well-being in the long run. Therefore, for Mike, it became very important to help his friend become more independent, and he developed strategies to promote her independency:

... lets say she's anxious about, I don't know, exams for example, it used to be that I'd had to say: 'this is what you do to' kind of give her some kind of structure of what to do, which I suppose wasn't the best option because she wasn't able to do it for herself, but she wasn't able to do it for herself anyway, but now if she's saying she's having a problem with exams, I'd say something like, and if she's panicking, I say: 'okay, just tell me three things that you can do about that' and then she can solve it herself, so it's gotten a lot easier for both of us. (Mike, p. 7, 191-200)

Like this, Mike succeeded in making her more independent. It also shows how Mike both was obliged to help her but also that he took on a lot of the responsibility himself. Furthermore, it suggests that Mike's strategy worked and she became less dependent, perhaps, providing support gave Mike a similar successful experience to that Taylor and Ann experienced. It

might promote feelings of pride to provide helpful support, which then makes the challenges and difficulties worth it.

### **The Challenges in Providing Support**

All participants mentioned that being a friend and provider of support for a socially anxious friend was challenging. Challenges consisted of worries about being good enough supporters, dealing with self-blame, and fears of not being able to provide the right and most helpful support. Participants also tried to take care of and protect themselves while experiencing the challenges in providing support.

#### ***Challenging feelings.***

Participants mentioned experiencing challenging feelings in providing support, such as feelings of disappointment, annoyance or anger. These feelings interfered with their understanding of what it meant to be a good supporter, which led to ambivalence in providing support. Participants also experienced having to overcome own negative feelings to provide support, and dealing with the feelings of their socially anxious friend too.

For Mike, being a good supporter meant being able to rationalise his friend's behaviour. When Mike's friend cancelled their plans due to her being anxious, he felt angry and disappointed but had to diminish these feelings:

... I don't bother getting pissed off with her, I don't bother having arguments 'cause that wouldn't lead anywhere ... she's anxious, she's not doing it because she's being spiteful, she's doing it because she feels scared and you can't be angry with someone for feeling scared ... (Mike, p. 19, l. 613-617)

This suggests how Mike cannot let himself be angry with his friend because he cannot be angry with someone with social anxiety, as she is not responsible for her behaviour. Rather, it is the anxiety he can be angry with. Mike's feelings of anger become invalid because he cannot accept them. Mike presented himself as able to look behind his own anger and her behaviour and rationalise it. By rationalising her behaviour, he wanted to present himself as a good supporter. A good supporter does not hold the socially anxious friend responsible but rather override his own feelings so that he is not bothered with either his own anger or her behaviour.

Ann experienced being limited in her actions because her friend would ask too much of her for support. This led to Ann feeling annoyed by her friend's behaviour:

... it did get quite hard because then I couldn't go out with people that I work with after work because she'd know what time I'd finish and she'd be like: 'you finish at ten, so you're going to be back here by half past. 'Why are you late, don't be late home' and things like that. ... obviously I didn't completely like just do everything she says, like I'm not like a pushover but there were times where I'd be out with my friends or something, she'd message me like: 'oh I'm crying my eyes out, I'm having a panic attack', things like that, so I'd know that like she would be freaking out, let's go home, and then sit outside her room for about half an hour trying to convince her to unlock the door, I mean things like that it annoyed me 'cause like I've just been out with some other people and, 'cause I was like it's annoying, I feel like you're just doing it for attention, so I'd come home and then she'd like want me to sit outside her door and like beg me to let her in because she's like crying her eyes out, things like that. It used to really

annoy me, it's like 'ugh'. ... I could hear her crying but she wouldn't let me in but she'd be telling me how bad it was, things like that, like you know just annoyed me that she wouldn't want me to help her but she wanted me to help her, like I felt like, I was like, there's nothing that I can do neither way, yeah ... (Ann, p. 12-13, l. 380-419)

Being limited in her actions annoyed Ann; both in relation to doing what she wanted to do – go out with her colleagues – and in relation to providing support. The way Ann worded it suggests that she found her friend's behaviour unreasonable and unjust to her. Ann spent a lot of time trying to be the good supporter and even set aside her own wants to help her friend out. Still, a closed door met her. Ann's annoyance suggests that Ann wanted her support and sacrifices to be appreciated. It made her question whether or not her friend was in need of help or if she were only doing it for attention. "Doing it for attention" could be understood as if she is playing on Ann's conscience and feelings of responsibility to get Ann to come home. Her friend's actions might be a behaviour led by the fear of losing Ann and her support.

Sabrina elaborates on how it felt to uphold a positive attitude while on a difficult and exhausting hike with two friends, one being socially anxious:

... it was kind of like this [shows up and down motions with her hand] but I would only show the moments where I'm really positive so I could encourage the others, but sometimes I did have to like overcome my personal negative thoughts to like encourage the others ... So it was challenging for me as well ... (Sabrina, p. 9, l. 285-290)

The challenge consisted of setting aside her own negative feelings as she estimated that they were not constructive in the situation because she expected them to increase the anxiousness of her friend. However, Sabrina also mentioned several times during the interview that the group of friends often juxtaposed their own worries with the anxiety of their socially anxious friend to make her less anxious:

... I think that the fact that we also say that we are not super confident either maybe like fills in the gap a little bit so that she doesn't feel that she's really, like, pathetic, and we are super confident and you see we kind of put ourselves on an equal level ... (Sabrina, p. 4, l. 100- 105)

This suggests that in some situations showing her own feelings, whether they would be feelings of insecurity or anxiousness, were used as a comfort and reassurance for her socially anxious friend. In other situations, there was little opportunity for Sabrina to show her own worries, for example during the hike. This indicates that Sabrina has to navigate between situations and sense in which situations she can allow her own feelings to appear and in which she cannot. It implies that being a provider of support is also a challenge of sensing when and when not to contribute with her own negative feelings.

For Taylor, it was particularly challenging to provide support for a friend of the opposite sex as the support he provided blurred with romantic feelings:

... I think girls have kind of words because guys think that they have to keep this manly, you know, presence ... and sometimes I was a bit too, I wouldn't say too harsh but ... I tend to like try to kick people in the butt to make them, you know,

like pull themselves together and I think ... I would kick her in the butt, metaphorically, when she would need kind words, and I would give her kind words when she actually needed to like you know be woken up, a wakeup call, so, I don't know if it's based on my personality or if it's a difference in the sex but I think even though we're equal we're still different in the way we function sometimes because of society ... sometimes I felt like I could have comforted her the way she needed to but I was, there was kind of a wall because, because I was a guy and she was a girl ... like there was a problem at some point in the beginning of third year because she started developing ... feelings for me because I was the only person that was there for her ... she was mistaking the gratitude and friendship for kind of other feelings so it was kind of hard stuff to go through as well, to deal with you'd say. (Taylor, p. 21, l. 683-709)

In this extract, Taylor brings up three issues in relation to gender. First, Taylor thinks that men and women provide different kinds of support based on different societal expectations to their gender; women are capable of comforting a friend with words and kindness, whereas men are capable of pushing a friend forward into taking action. Second, these expectations towards men and women challenges him as he feels capable of providing both kinds of support, but feels limited in providing what he considers a more feminine support – supporting with kind words. “The wall” between them can be interpreted, as a metaphor for how the societal expectations inhibit the genders in engaging with both kinds of support as he, as a man, needs to maintain and uphold a “manly presence”. Taylor seems to try to balance his support between living up to the expectations of his gender and also wanting to provide support according to what is needed instead of in accordance with gender expectations.



Furthermore, he questions whether these limitations are a result of his personality or of the societal expectations to him as a man. Taylor finds his answer in his own speculations, as gender and personality are both a creation of his upbringing in a society with certain expectations to him as a man. Third, gender created unforeseen tensions as his friend developed more romantic feelings towards him. These feelings emerged as a result of the emotional closeness they shared as he provided support for her. He later elaborated:

At first it was easy to deal with because I wasn't in a relationship and then when I got into a relationship ... she went through one of her worst stages because she was afraid, because I was in a relationship, I wouldn't be there for her anymore, yeah, she was really, really afraid of that, she was afraid that I had someone now so she would like get in the background ... you're being torn between two, and that can create tensions that wouldn't have been there if I would have been a girl ... (Taylor, p. 22, l. 713-727)

Taylor thinks the romantic feelings may not have surfaced if she had received support from a woman. "The wall" suddenly becomes a necessary barrier between them in order to remain friends. If Taylor engages with the "feminine support" it is likely to cause an emotional closeness that could lead to the development of romantic feelings, and to misunderstandings of his kindness and support. It suggests that there might be a difficulty in providing support between men and women. In a romantic relationship, Taylor would be able to provide the emotional support he wants while having no worries upholding his manly presence caring for her with a feminine support, whereas he as a friend has to stick to the masculine support to protect his masculinity.

### ***Turning the blame on oneself.***

Participants expressed worries about how they presented themselves throughout the interview. When talking about the hardships and difficulties of providing support, they often mentioned that they felt bad or were afraid to seem cold or selfish when expressing their more negative experiences or feelings. These worries often led to participants blaming themselves for their negative feelings.

Ann used the word 'annoying' quite often throughout the interview to describe different situations, however, she also withdrew her use of the word several times:

... it was a lot of hard work and it was really stressful and it [sighs] was really annoying, not annoying but it was quite hard ... (Ann, p. 9, l. 269-271)

Withdrawing her comments repeatedly suggests that Ann felt guilty for feeling annoyed. Referring to her friend's behaviour as annoying attributes her friend a negative characteristic and also put the blame on the friend. Like Mike in the previous subtheme, Ann could not be annoyed with her friend because her friend was not responsible for her annoying behaviour. Rather, she could only blame the social anxiety. This means that Ann could only blame herself for finding her friend annoying. It suggests that there exists an understanding of what it means to be a good supporter; for Ann, this means that she does not blame her socially anxious friend but rather blame herself. Using 'annoying' can make Ann appear unreasonable and unsupportive to others, and it seems important to Ann that she is not portrayed like this. Perhaps as she felt she was already doing everything she could to be a good friend and supporter.

Simon also became aware of his use of comments about his friend during the interview and also looked to blame himself rather than his friend:

... sometimes I feel like I don't know if, like it's just, I don't know if she plays on it [her social anxiety], sort of thing, maybe that's a bit rude to say ... (Simon, p. 7, l. 219-221)

Suggesting that his friend's anxiety was something she plays on makes Simon reflect upon whether or not it is appropriate to express this doubt. It might seem "rude" because he doubts her sincerity, thus indicating that he does not think she is being honest and that she is using an otherwise serious condition dishonestly in her advantage. That Simon commented on being rude is done in an attempt to appear less rude. It suggests that Simon felt that he could not critique or say negative things about his friend; instead he blamed himself for wording his negative thoughts or even thinking that she could be 'playing on it'.

Mike expressed worries about seeming cold for not understanding his friend's anxiety at times, which also led to self-blame:

... we used to argue a lot because I, it's going to make me seem pretty cold but I, I just couldn't understand ... I've been doing a lot of research about it ... to find out about these psychopathologies and I guess I tried to make myself more supportive if I would understand her. (Mike, p. 6, l. 169-178)

Mike did not want to seem unsympathetic or narrow-minded. Like Ann and Simon, he wanted to present himself as the good supporter who understood the needs and condition of his

socially anxious friend as opposed to blaming her. He even did research to understand her better. For the participants, critique of their socially anxious friend was not acceptable; a good supporter should never put the blame on the young person with social anxiety. However, participants found it acceptable to critique themselves for their own failings as friends and supporters. This means that feelings of annoyance, anger or disappointment become invalid; participants are not allowed to feel negatively towards their friends.

***Protecting oneself while providing support.***

As a response to the challenges experienced, participants developed various strategies for taking care of themselves while providing support. For a majority of participants, this indicated taking their distance from their friend for a short while.

I didn't really know what she had, yeah, social anxiety, I thought I'm not going to be a punching bag, so I remember like kind of taking my distance from her and then she apologized through Facebook and I realised that it was, it was a way for her to like to cope and knowing that she could like, I don't know, it's very, it's like, I wouldn't say it's messed up, but knowing that she could take it out on someone and that person is going to forgive her was very important for her, so when she would get like that, very upset and very angry, I would know that it was just momentarily and I would know that it wasn't against me, you know, it wasn't directed towards me, most of the time it was during an anxiety attack against someone else but it was directed towards me because she knew I could cope with it and could forgive her ... (Taylor, p. 13, l. 413-426)

Before he knew much about social anxiety, Taylor did not accept his friend letting her anger out on him and sought to protect himself by taking a distance. However, once he understood the reasons behind her outbursts, he could handle them by understanding that they had nothing to do with him. In this sense, understanding her situation made him able to protect himself when she lashed out. This relates to previous conclusions on how the participants could not blame their friends for their behaviour; before Taylor knew about her social anxiety he would not put up with the way she treated him. However, after knowing about her social anxiety he suddenly could. This indicates that the social anxiety changes the perception of what is fair and unfair treatment. Participants seem to be willing to accept a more difficult, demanding and unfair behaviour when a friend is socially anxious compared to a non-socially anxious friend. Social anxiety is causing their difficult behaviour, not the friends themselves. Taylor mentions that something is still “messed up”, which implies that despite his understanding of her social anxiety it still does not feel right to be the undeserved target of someone’s anger.

Taylor’s response to his friend’s behaviour was passive because he did not confront her but pulled away from her instead. Ann’s response was more confronting. Before Ann’s friend got diagnosed, Ann sat down with her friend and spoke about how she lashed out on Ann. This led to her friend deciding to go to the doctor where she got diagnosed with social anxiety. For Ann, the diagnosis of her friend’s social anxiety led to a better understanding of her friend’s condition and a better friendship too:

... she apologised that she always took everything out on me and that was before she was diagnosed, and we sat down and spoke about it and that’s when we said that she should probably go to the doctor’s about it ... since she went we’ve just

been a lot more open about it because of that, like we are a lot closer ... (Ann, p. 7, l. 202-208)

The diagnosis turned out to be a positive turn in their friendship, as it led to openness, honesty and understanding, and Ann became used less as a 'punching bag'. Ann and Taylor thus came to understand their friends' behaviour more after knowing about their social anxiety. However, Ann and Taylor reacted differently to the impact of the diagnosis. For Ann, the negative and difficult behaviour of her friend seemed to lessen when she got diagnosed, but for Taylor the behaviour of his friend continued. He was still the aim of her anger occasionally. This seemed to be because of the different way they approached it. Ann's confrontation led to more understanding whereas Taylor's more passive approach did not change the situation.

Simon felt that his friend used him for entertainment or a shoulder to cry on but never gave much in return. As a response to this he took his distance and decreased the contact with her:

... if I give someone the cold shoulder they can usually tell 'cause I'm not, I'm not that kind of person so that probably made her feel quite anxious but I'm gonna, if someone's making me feel bad about myself I'm not going to make an effort with them ... (Simon, p. 10, l. 327-329)

Like Taylor, Simon's response to his friend's behaviour was passive as he chose not to confront her. Being unable to place the blame on her behaviour, despite being unhappy about

it, Simon pulled away instead of addressing the issue. Pulling away was a way to protect himself from getting hurt from feeling used.

Mike also spoke about taking his distance as a way of protecting himself. When meeting his friend, Mike had to prepare himself for what he was about to meet to avoid getting shocked or scared:

... before I saw her I had to distance myself first, I'd have to tell myself 'this is, this thing might happen, it might have already happened, the damage might already have been done, she might already have cut herself', but even if she has then my job isn't to undo the damage, I can't go back and stop her from doing it, I can just prevent her from doing it again and if I want to do that then I'm going to have to support her. (Mike, p. 15, l. 478-485)

Mike found it difficult to be met by his friend's self-harm. Mike spoke of it as 'my job', which indicates that he felt a responsibility preventing her from self-harming. If he could not prevent it, his 'job' changed so instead he had to try to prevent her from doing it *again*. This suggests that Mike blamed himself, if she had self-harmed. To avoid blaming himself for things he could not change anyway, Mike took on the responsibility of trying to prevent her from self-harming again instead. In this way, providing support became more tangible, as preventing her from self-harming again was something he could actually do.

***Wanting to provide the right support.***

Participants often spoke about fearing doing something wrong or making mistakes when providing support. It indicates that there is a right and wrong way of providing support, which either helps or hinders the socially anxious friend in feeling better.

Participants were constantly trying to avoid increasing the anxiousness of their friend and trying to provide the right, most helpful support instead. Also, some participants felt their support to be too basic to have an effect, but nevertheless, experienced that their support helped.

Sabrina expressed how she and a friend used positivity and encouragement to provide the most helpful support for their socially anxious friend:

... we would often like just speak to each other and just say like: 'we have to, we have to look after staying positive and encouraging otherwise it will go wrong' ...  
(Sabrina, p. 18, l. 572-575)

Sabrina indicated that her behaviour could make the situation worse, and that there was a right and wrong way of providing support. This suggests that Sabrina had to adjust her behaviour and outlook in order to provide the right support. Taylor's experience supported this point. Taylor spoke of providing different types of support; he either supported her with kind words and care, or with encouragement to push her forward. Taylor had to find the right balance between these types of support:

... you're afraid you're not going to say the right thing, you don't want to make it worse, one time I made it worse because I down, I think that's the word, downplayed it, the importance of her dissertation, I said: 'it's fine, it's dissertation but you're going to be fine, you're doing your best and no one's going to judge you', and it was the wrong words because her parents are expecting a lot from her so, even if you know the person well sometimes you're just afraid of



saying the wrong words and make it worse so you have to be very careful and it, I think it takes its toll on you as well ... (Taylor, p. 9, l. 268-277)

From experience Taylor knew that there was a right and wrong way of providing support. Taylor feared providing the wrong support for her because it would increase her anxiousness. This means that a lot of responsibility was put onto Taylor's shoulders in hindering an increase in anxiousness. Taylor and Sabrina's experiences suggest that participants want to do the best for their friends but they also seek to avoid providing what they feel is insufficient support. It could suggest that if they provided the right support they did not have to blame themselves if something went wrong. As an example, Taylor put blame on himself for downplaying the importance of his friend's dissertation. He experienced the support he provided as insufficient. He would like to avoid this experience of insufficiency and self-blame, which caused him to be careful around his friend from then on.

Mike's worries of providing the wrong support differed from the other participants. Mike was worried about helping his friend too much, whereas the others were afraid to do too little or do wrong:

... I'm always concerned that if I'm doing too much then that's not her doing it for herself, cause in the end it's her problem so her own mind and, I had a few weeks of therapy and then afterwards, after I left her, whenever there was a problem I didn't think I could solve it so I was thinking: 'okay, where's [name of his therapist], where's my therapist?', so it was important that she was able to deal with as much as she could herself so that if I wasn't there, she'd be able to fix it herself so she wouldn't become dependent. (Mike, p. 8, l. 232-240)

Mike drew on his own experiences of therapy to provide the right support for his friend. For Mike, providing the wrong support was to provide too much support so that his friend became dependent on him. This suggests that Mike felt that doing wrong encouraged her dependency.

Ann and Taylor's interviews showed how they sometimes simplified their effort of providing support. Ann explained how she helped her friend calm down when she became anxious:

... I had to take her, like take her back into the car and then just sit with the radio on like super, super loud and just make her sing all the songs that she knew until she was fine, just stupid things like that so she'll be alright about it 'cause she always, she just gets so worked up ... (Ann, p. 8, l. 236-241)

Ann spoke of how she perceived the support she provided as "stupid things". It suggests that Ann simplified her own actions, degrading them to nothing more than singing songs in a car. She might simplify them as to her it is nothing much. Another explanation might be that Ann has got an idea of how the best and most helpful support is provided, and according to her, it is not through cheerier, light-hearted actions used to distract her anxious friend.

Taylor spoke of how he specifically provided support for his friend during an anxiety attack and also found that his support was too simple or basic:

... you feel like you are repeating yourself, you know, that it's going to be okay and it's no more, but I think that's something that they need to hear, you know ... comfort them in that, in that way, because it's, it's, it's silly but it's just when the

words are said out loud they have more impact than when they are just written ...  
(Taylor, p. 5, l. 136-141)

Taylor spoke of his support as “silly” because it consisted of repeating reassurances he had said before. It suggests that Taylor does not want to use basic reassuring words; he, too, had an idea of how the best support could be provided, and indicated that it was not with the more usual and well-known reassurance, such as saying that everything will be okay. Despite the words being “silly”, Taylor spoke of how they nevertheless had an impact on his friend.

In the midst of worrying about how to provide the right support for their friends, participants remarked that when their socially anxious friend was with them they felt less anxious in general. An extract from Simon’s interview portrays this experience for all the participants:

... when she goes out with say someone like me in a social environment, I think she feels more comfortable anyway ... (Simon, p. 3, l. 89-91)

Despite worrying about providing the wrong support, participants felt what Simon described; that their simple presence helped decrease the social anxiety of their friend in situations in, which it would normally occur if they were alone.

### **The Meaning of Providing Support**

As previous sections of the analysis have shown, participants experienced providing support as challenging. However, participants also spoke of the value in their friendship, and the meaning behind wanting to provide support. This section of the analysis

will engage with the meaning that participants ascribe to providing support. This includes participants being able to see past the social anxiety, understanding their friendship as bidirectional, and pointing out how providing support had also benefitted them. Providing support was thus also experienced as rewarding to the non-socially anxious friends.

***“It’s not you, it’s the anxiety”.***

This subtheme covers the extracts of the transcripts where participants talk about their friends as more than their social anxiety. They are not their social anxiety; on the contrary, the social anxiety is a condition, an aspect of their personality, but not their whole person or life world.

Simon talked about how everyone has got issues or habits that one as a friend will experience, have to deal with and might find annoying. However, this did not change the importance and value of the particular friendship:

... she’s a very good friend, like we’re always going to be in a good place but everyone has these little things that are going to annoy you ... (Simon, p. 11-12, l. 361-363)

Simon indicated that every friendship has got its difficulties and that the difficulty with this one was social anxiety. However, it is not experienced as a problem; he would not be without this friendship. Ann also experienced that all friendships had difficulties and that social anxiety was experienced as one of these difficulties:

... everyone has their own issues, things like that, I think it's just once you both know that it is actual like social anxiety and it is an actual, it is a problem, it's a lot easier to work with ... (Ann, p. 14, l. 436-439)

For Ann, every person and every friendship has issues. Social anxiety is thus not regarded as a problem for the friendship but rather an issue similar to other issues that friends might experience. Ann and Simon do not want to scapegoat their friends' behaviour on social anxiety. Rather, Simon clearly expressed how he did not want to label behaviour, good as difficult, as being because of his friend's social anxiety:

... I don't want to try to look all her behaviours and think 'oh it's because she's socially anxious'... (Simon, p. 5, l. 143-145)

Simon expresses that not all issues his friend experiences are related to being socially anxious; she is more than her social anxiety. This supports previous findings of this analysis of how friends do not want to hold their socially anxious friend responsible for their demanding or difficult behaviour. Simon expresses here that although she has got social anxiety he cannot blame all of her difficult or annoying behaviour on the condition; in fact, sometimes she really just can be annoying without it having to do with social anxiety. In that case, he has no problem blaming her for being difficult, but as soon as social anxiety causes her behaviour he puts the blame on himself.

Mike seemed to regard social anxiety differently than Ann and Simon. He seemed to perceive social anxiety as a flaw:

... I'm not friends with her because of her anxiety, I'm friends with her in spite of that ... (Mike, p. 21, l. 655-657)

Mike's understanding of social anxiety opposed Simon and Ann's understanding. Rather than seeing social anxiety like an issue similar to other issues that friends' experience, he seemed to hold resentment towards it:

... it's not her that I have a problem with, it's the fact that she has a condition ... (Mike, p. 20, l. 623-625)

For Ann and Simon, social anxiety was not understood as a problem in the friendship; for Mike, on the other hand, social anxiety was an actual problem. It seemed that Mike would rather be without the social anxiety and saw it as something that got in the way of their friendship. This might be a response to the difficulties experienced of being the primary provider of support, but could also be that Mike experienced the anxiety hindered them in experiencing having fun as friends.

### ***A bidirectional friendship.***

All participants agreed that the friendship was bidirectional, which created the foundation for their friendship with their socially anxious friend. Participants experienced receiving support, getting something in return and having a good friendship. They were friends because of the person, not because they had to provide support for someone socially anxious.

Participants expressed that having to provide support made them become very close with their socially anxious friend. For Mike, this meant that he still after many years of

friendship spoke on the phone with his friend every day. As mentioned earlier, for Taylor, the closeness meant that the relationship he had with his friend felt more like a relation to a family member. The closeness that participants experienced was a result of the emotional closeness emerging when providing support.

The closeness was experienced for both parts and the friendships were experienced as bidirectional. Taylor experienced that they both gained something from the friendship because the support was mutual:

... it's both ways, I think it's mutual, you know, even if some people say: 'oh I've been there for them and they've never like given me anything in return', that's not true because if it was true, they wouldn't have [stuck], you know, around, you only do that because you get something in return ... (Taylor, p. 16, l. 500-504)

Taylor expressed how the friendship lasted because she was also there for him. If he were simply to provide support without receiving any in return, they would not be friends. Mike expressed similar thoughts:

... if she was having these panic attacks ... and she still wasn't a good friend then, then I wouldn't bother ... (Mike, p. 21, l. 653-655)

Mike would not have put the same effort into providing support for someone who was not a good friend. In this lies an understanding of what it means to be a good friend; a good friend is someone who provides support for Mike if he needs it. Just like he provides support for her if she needs it. Simon and Ann reinforced Taylor and Mike's experiences as they also mentioned

how they got something in return for providing support; they provided support but also received support. This suggests that if the friendship and support were only one-sided, then it would change the nature of the friendship. This means that the main reason for being friends was the friendship itself; not the fact that participants were providing support. Rather, they provided support *because* they were already good friends.

***The positive effect of being a provider of support.***

The positive effects of being a provider of support is a subtheme emerged solely from Taylor's experiences, as he frequently touched upon the subject. Throughout the interview, he expressed the positive aspects of providing support and what providing support meant for his own life:

... it's going to sound weird but sometimes they feel like shit so they send you something on Facebook and you, you're like very tired and you just send something but like you don't really mean it ... you just send for example: 'oh it's going to be okay, you're like, you're a great person and you've like, you've just been building your, your, your weapons to like fight life', you just say stuff that is so basic but it makes ... a real impact on them and they like genuinely feel the change, and you're like I just did that and it wasn't like, it wasn't like, you didn't like really mean it in a way, and then in the letters they mention that kind of stuff and you realize that it meant much more for them than it meant for you and they see you as a better person than you actually like see yourself [I: Okay yeah] so being, I don't know like, seeing that perception of yourself through the eyes of another person is really rewarding as well. Yeah, and it helps because sometimes you're like you don't feel like you're actually making a change or sometimes I'm



like: 'oh I'm helping them but like, it's like, you know, it's not really har-, how do you say that, not really heartfelt' it's like, I'm not really putting any effort into this, I'm just being almost like a robot but just the idea of being there it helps them, yeah. So, yeah. (Taylor, p. 17, l. 537-557)

This relates to Taylor and Ann's idea of the best possible way to provide support, which they did not relate to basic reassurances or light-hearted actions. Taylor was overwhelmed by how valued his support was compared to how little effort he felt he put into it. He experienced his support as basic and simple; it involved reassuring her that everything would be okay, a saying used commonly, between Taylor and his friend, but also in general between people. To Taylor, it did not seem genuine to support her with clichés. It suggests he felt clichés are overused and that there are not ascribed any personal meaning to them. Taylor felt support should be "heartfelt". In these situations, Taylor realized the importance of his role, and realizing this was rewarding for him. It made him feel like a better person because he helped make someone else feel better about themselves. He even mentioned that she saw him as a better person than he saw himself. Providing support thus gave him a feeling of being good and succeeding, which can be linked to feelings of pride and achievement. Taylor also mentioned the positive effect of providing support earlier in the interview:

... and then in return you realize that she's bringing something to you that's very important like empathy and being able to understand other people, that's something that helped me every day in life in my relationships with other people ... (Taylor, p. 12, l. 376-379).

Providing support also taught Taylor some skills in coping with different kinds of people, understanding people better and putting himself in their position. These skills are actually useful in his everyday life, which means that providing support has enriched his life in these aspects.

## **Discussion**

This qualitative study aimed to investigate how friends experience and make sense of providing support to a socially anxious young person. Through an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), three super-ordinate themes were generated, which showed the complexity and breadth of being a provider of support. The themes were: *experiencing responsibility*, *the challenges in providing support*, and *the meaning of providing support*. The analysis showed that providing support for a socially anxious friend was a challenging experience, however, it was a friendship that participants would not want to be without. The discussion will contextualize the findings with literature from previous research on the subject. It will also discuss the limitations of the study and include suggestions for future research.

The first super-ordinate theme, *experiencing responsibility*, showed that friends of young people with social anxiety experienced great responsibility towards their friends, as a result of the socially anxious friend being highly dependent upon participants' support. These findings align with literature on young carers, which demonstrates that young carers shoulder more responsibility than their peers and friends (Smyth, Blaxland, & Cass, 2011). The findings of the current study are also supported by previous studies showing that socially anxious people often show high levels of dependency and rely upon close relationships with

friends, family and romantic partners for support (Darcy, Davila, & Beck, 2005; Davila & Beck, 2002; Iancu, Bodner, & Ben-Zion, 2015; Nielsen & Cairns, 2009).

The present study showed how friends are often the primary provider of support. These findings are supported by Schneider and Tessier's (2007) study, which found that socially anxious early adolescents understood and referred to friendship as a source of help and support, whereas non-socially anxious early adolescents primarily understood friendship as an intimate bond between close friends. It suggests that socially anxious people regard friends as someone they can turn to when seeking help.

For some of the participants, the responsibility they experienced resembled the responsibility of a younger family member more than that of a friend. It was greater and more obligating. A possible explanation to why friends might present themselves with such great responsibility can be found in research on friends who provide support for a young person who self-harms. This research has demonstrated that friends of someone who self-harms compare themselves to family members to represent the closeness of their friendship, and how their actions went beyond that of 'normal' friendship (Heath, Rodham, & Gavin, in prep.). In the present study, similar reasons might count as participants also emphasized that they were very close with their socially anxious friends.

The second super-ordinate theme, *the challenges in providing support*, demonstrated the many challenges participants faced when providing support. It showed how participants often experienced dealing with self-blame. Research on caregiving for people with mental disorders has demonstrated that carers often deal with high levels of self-blame (Moses, 2010; Treasure, Murphy, Szmukler, Todd, Gavan, & Joyce, 2001). However, the reason for blaming oneself differs depending on the carer's relation to the person cared-for. For friends in the present study, self-blame emerged as a consequence of them not being able to

hold the socially anxious friend responsible for their difficult behaviour. Instead, participants blamed themselves for expressing the more negative feelings or experiences related to providing support. Studies on parents' experiences of being carers have shown that their self-blame emerge when they feel they are partly to blame for the development of the illness as a consequence of how they have brought up their children (Moses, 2010; Perkins, Winn, Murray, Murphy, & Schmidt, 2004; Stapley, Midgley, & Target, 2016; Whitney, Murray, Gavan, Todd, Whitaker, & Treasure, 2005; Winn, Perkins, Murray, Murphy, & Schmidt, 2004). This suggests that the relation between carer and cared-for has significance in determining how self-blame is experienced and why it occurs.

The findings of the present study showed how friends enable but also decrease the anxiousness in their friends. Stillar et al. (2016) showed that the more carers of people with eating disorders blamed themselves for the illness, the more likely they were to engage in behaviours that would "accommodate and enable ED symptoms" (p. 181). For example, letting the illness control the family routines around meals (Stillar et al., 2016). Some participants in the current study experienced providing support on the terms of their friend, meaning that the social anxiety dictated what the friends would spend their time with, for example staying the whole day inside instead of going out. Thus, participants contributed to the maintenance of their friends' social anxiety through engaging in activities that satisfied, rather than challenged their social anxiety, and in so doing, set aside their own preferences. All participants, however, also expressed that when they were with their socially anxious friend in different social situations their friend generally felt less anxious. Supported by previous studies these findings show that non-socially anxious friends can decrease anxiousness in a socially anxious person (Pontari & Glenn, 2012; Rodebaugh, Lim, Shumaker,

Levinson, & Thompson, 2015; van Zalk & van Zalk, 2015). Thus, the friends in this project both in-directly supported and decreased the social anxiety of their friend.

The self-blame emerged as a result of participants not feeling able to hold their friends' responsible for their difficult behaviour. Blaming the socially anxious friend interfered with participants' understanding of what it meant to be a good friend and supporter. It suggests that participants wanted to uphold a coherent self-narrative as the good friend and supporter. As Gergen and Gergen (1988, p. 18) state "in developing a self-narrative the individuals attempt to establish coherent connections among life events". Blaming their friend would challenge their self-narrative, thus, to ensure a coherent self-narrative, participants blamed their reaction instead of their friends' behaviour, thus maintaining their selfless, supportive, self-construction.

When participants' friends were given the diagnosis of social anxiety, the participants seemed better able to understand their friends' behaviour as they had a more appropriate frame of reference to help them make sense of their experiences. Martin (2003) discussed 'sleeping metaphors', which implicates that there are social frameworks that helps people understand their experiences. The clinical diagnosis, thus, provides participants with a better understanding of their friends' behaviour because there exist social frameworks to explain social anxiety. In having the diagnosis, the friends were able to protect themselves when providing support by understanding that when their friends lashed out on them then it was not directed at them but was a consequence of their diagnosis.

The third super-ordinate theme, *the meaning of providing support*, engaged with the meaning that participants ascribed to providing support. Findings showed that the friendships were not based on providing support, rather, participants provided support for their socially anxious friend because they were already friends. A study on the experience of

being friends with a young person with psychosis by Brand, Harrop and Ellet (2011) found that friends were able to “see past” the psychosis. This meant that they still recognized their friend with psychosis to be the same person as before they developed psychosis (Brand, Harrop, & Ellet, 2011). Participants in the present study were also able to “see past”, or disregard, the social anxiety. They expressed understanding social anxiety as a condition and that friends were more than their social anxiety. Anxiety was regarded as a difficult aspect of their friend’s life or as an issue like everyone else had issues, but it did not hinder the progression or importance of the friendship.

Research on caregiving suggests that carers do not only experience negative outcomes of caregiving, rather, they experience caregiving as obligating but also as rewarding or fulfilling (Cohen, Colantonio, & Vernich, 2002). This was somewhat reflected in the findings of this study. Participants clearly felt an obligation and increased responsibility towards their friends, but results suggested that some participants found success in being able to help, despite the difficulties and challenges also presented to them. It is somewhat similar to the “purpose, pride and achievement” (Gray, Robinson, Seddon, & Roberts, 2009, p. 125) reported and experienced by family carers providing support for people with mental health issues. One participant specifically spoke of providing support as rewarding. Despite challenges and difficulties, all participants remained friends with the socially anxious person and none of the participants expressed that they would rather be without the friendship.

## **Limitations**

IPA as a method focuses on the particular and therefore uses a small sample size, which some parts of research, especially quantitative research, might regard as a limitation of the method. However, Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) argued that a smaller sample size

was an advantage to IPA as it enabled a richer depth to the analysis, which larger sample sizes might inhibit (Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty, & Hendry, 2011). Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty, and Hendry (2011) argued that “a deeper and more interpretative analysis could be seen as drawing the analysis away from the original meanings” (p. 21), and that this was an advantage as it “encouraged researchers to ‘go beyond’ immediately apparent content” (p. 21). As the interpretation of the analyst is a major part of the analysis within IPA, the smaller the sample size the more enabled the researcher is to engage in-depth with each case. The sample size of the present study was appropriate for an IPA study aiming to go into depth with the experiences of the participants (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

The generalizability of IPA studies has been questioned and discussed and it will briefly be touched upon here. However, the purpose of IPA is not to make generalisations but address the subjective lived experiences of the individual (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). The findings of an IPA study can have broad effects on research despite its small sample size. Reid, Flowers, and Larkin (2005) argued that the depth of an IPA analysis and the commonalities between cases could have broader effects for research, perhaps more than acknowledged by quantitative research (Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty, & Hendry, 2011). With a hermeneutic approach, IPA touches the general or universal when it touches the particular (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009), thus. IPA gains an insight into the whole by gaining an insight into the individual, and vice versa (Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty, & Hendry, 2011).

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data for this study. As I was relatively new to interviewing, the interview schedule was created as a semi-structured guide and also contained possible prompts. The more comfortable I became with the interview guide, the less structured the interviews became. Consequently, I was better able to leave the

schedule and follow the directions of the participants' stories as they unfolded. My ability to follow the participants' stories also depended upon participants' willingness to share. During some of the interviews, the interview schedule worked merely as a 'loose agenda' (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009), as participants did not need much probing to talk about their experiences. In other interviews, the interview schedule proved especially useful with more reserved and less forthcoming participants (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Although all interviews contained rich and detailed descriptions of participants' experiences, the interviews that were less structured involved more depth. This is similar to the findings of previous research concluding that unstructured interviews generate richer data than other interview techniques because the participant's perspective is in focus, not the researchers (McCann & Clark, 2005; Moyle, 2002). I assume that participants' willingness to share was also connected to my own comfort with interviewing; the more comfortable I became, the less structured the interview became and the more participants seemed to share. This demonstrates how interviewing is an interactive process between participant and interviewer (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

The process of recruiting participants for the present study demonstrates how the study in itself was an on-going reflexive practice. This study used posters to recruit participants. Posters were at first put up in common areas at the university where most people were expected to notice them, such as the library and the cafeteria; however, this did not engage people's interest in the study. The advertisement of posters was then changed, and consequently posters were put up in bathrooms over hand dryers, near the sinks and on the back of toilet doors. This sparked a larger interest and recruitment than the first strategy, which might have two explanations; first, that participants actually noticed the posters and



took their time to read them; secondly, that participants in the bathrooms had more privacy to grab a note with contact details of the researcher.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

In the present study participants found it more difficult and challenging to provide support as the primary provider than providing support in a group of close friends. The participants of this study discussed how providing support in a group decreased feelings of being limited or overworked because responsibility was divided. This indicates that being more than one close friend providing support can secure the wellbeing of the provider of support too. For future research, it would be relevant to look further into the psychological outcomes of providing support for a socially anxious person alone versus in a group. Furthermore, it is relevant to look into how friends' experience providing support while also receiving support from others. Research on support groups for carers of people with schizophrenia have shown to decrease the burden on caregivers, help them develop coping strategies, increase their knowledge of the illness, and receive support from others (Chien, Norman, & Thompson, 2006; Chou, Liu, & Chu, 2002). Chou, Liu, and Chu's study (2002) suggested that support groups were essential to caregivers because they "need emotional support to help them deal with their feelings and set realistic limits for themselves" (p. 720). Experiencing difficulties in setting limitations for providing support were also issues raised and experienced by participants in the current study. Formal support in the form of support groups can thus facilitate positive developments for caregivers. The findings of the current study suggest that participants who provide support in a group of close friends face less negative challenges, which suggests that also informal support (from friends) can facilitate a better experience for the caregiver. This is relevant considering that young informal carers of

people with a mental health illness are a group in society in need of support (Ali, Ahlström, Krevers, Sjöström, & Skärsäter, 2013; Ali, Krevers, Sjöström, & Skärsäter, 2013). Young informal carers often seek support from parents or friends but do not want to overload them with worries (Ali, Krevers, Sjöström, & Skärsäter, 2013). These findings support the experiences of participants in the current study in their feeling of being alone in handling a great responsibility. Formal or informal support could benefit young people providing support for someone socially anxious.

Furthermore, the self-blame experienced by friends could be researched in its own right in future research, especially as self-blame have been found to disempower the carer in providing support, and influence the carer's ability to support most helpfully (Stillar et al., 2016). Specifically, research could aim at exploring in-depth when the self-blame occurs, how it affects the friend, and how they handle the feeling. Even though participants of the current study did not directly express that they needed support, they emphasised the weight on their shoulders. Support for young people helping a socially anxious friend could focus on reducing the self-blame. Simply spreading an awareness of self-blame as a natural consequence of providing support instead of feeling unable to provide the right support. Support for friends could also relate directly to what kind of support is relevant as participants experienced worries about making mistakes or providing the wrong support.

The present study contributed to research on the field of friends, friendships and social anxiety by carrying out a qualitative study and dedicating it solely to the friends' experiences, studying them within their own right. Generally, future research is recommended to engage qualitatively with the experiences of friends in order to contribute to the already predominantly quantitative research in the field with an in-depth understanding of how and why friends experience and feel what they do when providing support.

## **Conclusion**

As the experiences of friends are often grouped with the experiences of parents or partners, the aim of this study was to investigate the experiences of friends within their own right. The research aimed at examining how friends experience and make sense of providing support for a socially anxious young person.

Conclusions drawn from this research indicates that friends who provide support for a socially anxious young person experience a great responsibility on their shoulders as a result of the socially anxious friend being dependent and turning to their friends for support. Participants experienced being the primary provider of support and were given a lot of responsibility but some also took on a lot of responsibility themselves.

Providing support was experienced as challenging and done out of a sense of obligation. Challenges consisted of worries about being good enough supporters, dealing with self-blame, and fears of not being able to provide the right and most helpful support. Self-blame emerged as a consequence of participants wanting to uphold a coherent self-narrative as a good friend and supporter.

Some participants described their friendship as more of a relation to a younger family member. Participants compared the friendship to a familial relation to portray the closeness of the friendship.

Participants who provided support in a group and shared the responsibility between friends experienced less responsibility and dependency from their socially anxious friend. This suggests that sharing the responsibility of providing support could benefit the wellbeing of the non-socially anxious friends.

A clinical diagnosis offered a frame of reference for participants, which meant that friends came to understand their socially anxious friends' behaviours better. For some, this meant they could handle the situation better and differently than before.

Participants also spoke of the value in their friendship, and the meaning behind wanting to provide support. They were able to "see past" the social anxiety and understand their friends as more than socially anxious. They were friends because of the person, not because they had to provide support for someone socially anxious, and they would not want to be without the friendship. Participants also understood their friendship as bidirectional and that they also received support from the friendship. They pointed out how providing support was obligating but also rewarding and often linked to positive feelings of pride, success and achievement.

This study contributed to the research on the field with a qualitative perspective of the often overlooked friends. The research showed the complexity and breadth of friends' experiences and sense-making of providing support for a socially anxious young person.

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# Are you a friend of someone who has social anxiety



University of  
Chester

*Would you be interested in talking about your  
experiences of the friendship?*

This research focuses on **your experiences** and aims to understand how young people experience being in a friendship with someone who has social anxiety and how they **provide support** for their friend.

You will share your experience in an individual interview that will last about an hour and take place at the University of Chester Parkgate Road campus.

Are you interested or have any questions, feel free to contact [REDACTED]  
or grab a tab below with my contact details.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Posters

## **Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet**

### **Participant information sheet: *How do friends make sense of providing support?***

You are being invited to take part in a research, which functions as the data collection of a dissertation project. Please take your time to read through this participant information sheet to gain information on the research. Do not hesitate to contact the researcher if you have any questions or concerns regarding the research. Take your time to discuss the research with friends, relatives or others if needed and decide whether or not you wish to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form. Regarding any dissemination of the dissertation project, anonymity and confidentiality of participants will be maintained. Thank you for reading this.

**What is the aim of the research?** The research project aims at understanding how young people experience being friends with someone who has social anxiety. It focuses on how friends provide support for a friend with social anxiety, what it means to the friends to provide this support and how they provide it. The aim of this research is therefore to gain an insight into the experiences of a young person in a friendship with someone with social anxiety.

**Why have I been chosen?** You have identified yourself as a friend of someone with social anxiety (who is not a sibling or family member) and you want to share your thoughts and experiences on this friendship.

**What is my part in the research?** Your part in the research is to share your experiences of being friends with a friend with social anxiety. You will be asked questions to share your view, thoughts and experiences as widely as possible. If there are questions you wish not to answer during the interview, let the researcher know and the question will be omitted from the interview.

**How is confidentiality and anonymity maintained?** No names or other personal details that could link back to you and others involved or mentioned during the interview will be shared in the research. All participants will be given pseudonyms to maintain anonymity and confidentiality.

**What happens to the data collected?** The researcher will use the data from the interview to conduct an analysis of how friends make sense of providing support for their friends with social anxiety. Along with your interview, 6-10 participants will contribute in interviews to the data collection. Note, that interviews will be recorded and later transcribed for use in analysis.

**How long will my data be retained?** Your data will be retained until the final marks of the dissertation have been received. Marks are expected received in January 2017. After this date, all data will be deleted.

**Can I withdraw from the research if I change my mind?** Participation is voluntary. You can withdraw from the research up until the end of the interview. Withdrawal after this point is



not possible. At the end of the interview, you will be asked if you still feel comfortable that your interview will be used in the research. If you say yes, the interview will be used for analysis and withdrawal is no longer possible. If you say no, your interview will not be used. A time limit for withdrawal has been made to make sure that data collected and used for analysis can not be withdrawn when the analysis has begun or when the dissertation has been handed in.

**Are there any risks in being involved?** You might feel a slight discomfort if the experiences you have had have been difficult. Therefore, take time to decide whether or not your thoughts and experiences are something you feel comfortable sharing with the researcher.

**What are the advantages of being involved?** The interview is all about you and your experiences and it can be enjoyable to have time to talk and reflect upon yourself. It is important to mention that the research is not a therapeutic session.

**What is the duration of the research?** The interview is set to take between 45-70 minutes dependent on the individual interview.

**Where does the research take place?** The research will take place at the University of Chester in building [to be confirmed], room [to be confirmed]. Unfortunately compensation for travel to the university cannot be provided for participants.

#### **Contact details and information**

Family and Child Psychology MSc student at the University of Chester, [REDACTED]

email: [REDACTED]

Supervisor, Hannah Heath: [h.heath@chester.ac.uk](mailto:h.heath@chester.ac.uk)

#### **Sources of help and support:**

Should you feel any discomfort or distress before, during or after participating in the research, please find help and support in sources given here.

If you are a student at the University of Chester, you might want to talk to your PAT or the Student Support Service in Binks building on Parkgate Road campus – [student.welfare@chester.ac.uk](mailto:student.welfare@chester.ac.uk).

If you experience greater concerns after participation, you might want to consider involving your GP. If you are not a student at the university, please contact your GP if you feel any distress.

If you wish to find out more about social anxiety and anxiety in general, you can visit websites:

- <https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk> Under Get Help Now, go to Anxiety Information to gain information on anxiety in young people.
- <https://www.mind.org> Under Information and Support go to Types of mental health problems to find advice for friends and family on how to support someone with anxiety.

## Appendix C: Consent Form

### Consent form



University of  
Chester

**Title of project:** How do friends make sense of providing support

**Researcher:** [REDACTED] Family and Child MSc student, University of Chester

Please tick the boxes if you agree.

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet and the study.  
I have also had time to ask questions. ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from  
the study up until the end of my interview. I understand that there is no opportunity  
to withdraw after this point. ☐
3. I understand that the interview is not therapeutic and I know where to seek help  
and support if needed. ☐
4. I consent to my interview being audio recorded and that the recordings will be used  
for analysis and retained until final marks have been received in January 2017. ☐
5. I agree to take part in the study. ☐

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date signed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date signed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the researcher

## **Appendix D:** Interview Schedule and Prompts

Please talk as widely as possible about your experiences.

Will you, to begin with, tell me a bit about yourself?

Could you tell me about how you became friends with your friend who has social anxiety?

- How would you describe your friendship?
- What do you do together?
- How long has your friend had social anxiety? How long have you known?
- Has your friend been clinically diagnosed?

Can you tell me about what place the anxiety has in your friendship at the moment?

- Has it changed? Examples?
- Are there things you can/cannot do together?
- Have you become closer/less close?

Can you describe an experience where the anxiety was present?

- What did you do?
- How did it make you feel?
- What did you think of the situation?
- How did you experience your own role in this situation?

Can you describe an experience where you provided support for your friend?

- What did you do?
- How did it make you feel?
- Why do you think it made you feel this way? (challenged, difficult etc.)
- Can you tell me more about that?

Can you tell me about how you experience providing support?

- How does it make you feel?
- Do you feel able to help?

- What did you think of the situation?
- How did you experience your own role in this situation?
- Do you talk to someone else about it?

Can you tell me how you experience being in a friendship with someone socially anxious?

- Do you experience it to be different from other friendships?

Is there anything else that I haven't covered that you wish to discuss?

Do you have any questions?

(Are you comfortable that your interview will be used in the research project?)

Thank you for participating!

## Appendix E: Ethics Form



University of  
Chester

UNIVERSITY OF CHESTER, DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY  
APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

a/f

**WORKING TITLE:** *How do friends make sense of providing support?*

### A. Applicant & Personnel

Applicant status: Staff ☐ Postgraduate Research ☒ Postgraduate Taught ☒ Undergraduate ☐ Module Number: *PS7112* [Click here to enter text.](#)

Supervisor, if applicant is a student: *Hannah Heath* Email: *h.heath@chester.ac.uk*

Additional personnel 1: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Email: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Role: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Tel: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Additional personnel 2: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Email: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Role: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Tel: [Click here to enter text.](#)

[Attach details for any additional personnel](#)

### B. SUBMISSION TYPE

#### 1. What is the submission type?

☒ First submission to this or any other committee

☐ Resubmission of a rejected application by this committee → [Attach previous submission](#)

↳ Summarise the changes made to the application since it was last considered by this committee, with reference to the committee's comments: [Click here to enter text.](#)

☐ First submission to this committee; has been submitted to another committee.

↳ Give details of the previous submission. Include committee name, date of submission and outcome. [Click here to enter text.](#) → [Attach previous submission](#) → Go to Section C

☐ Revised submission intended to replace an application approved by this committee

↳ Give details of the previous submission date and any changes that have been made. → [Attach previous submission](#)  
[Click here to enter text.](#)

### C. FUNDING

#### 2. Is the project subject to external funding?

☒ No → Go to Section D

☐ Yes → Is funding secured? ☐ No → Provide details: [Click here to enter text.](#)

☐ Yes Funding body and mailing address: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Grant number, if applicable: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Named PI: [Click here to enter text.](#)

### D. NATURE OF RESEARCH

#### 3. Are you a member of staff applying for approval for a student related research exercise?

☒ No → Go to Section E ☐ Yes → Module code and name [Click here to enter text.](#)

i. Will the student/s be collecting data unsupervised and outside of lecture/lab time ☐ No → Go to Section E

☐ Yes → Provide details of how ethical standards will be maintained [Attach necessary documentation](#) [Click here to enter text.](#)

## E. RESEARCH PLAN & METHODOLOGY

*Provide a detailed description of the proposed research. You should expect to write a paragraph on each section. Please note that there is a requirement to show that the project is well formulated in terms of drawing on relevant literature and is methodologically, analytically and scientifically sound.*

4. **Rationale/background** (theoretical justification for conducting the research): This research wishes to investigate how friends experience and make sense of providing support for friends with social anxiety. The experiences of friends as providers of support for young people with mental or physical health issues have largely been grouped with the experiences of either parents or partners (Hill, Shepherd & Hardy, 1998; Hughes, Locock, & Ziebland, 2013; van Zalk & van Zalk, 2014) and rarely studied in their own right. Thus, there exist a gap in research on the experiences of friends in their own right that this study wishes to examine. It has been established that the kind of support friends can provide for young people with social anxiety are of great importance to their well-being (van Zalk & van Zalk, 2014) and that close friendships with positive qualities can prevent young people from developing social anxiety (La Greca & Harrison, 2005). However, these studies, among others (Rodebaugh, Lim, Fernandez, Langer, Weisman, Tonge, Levinson, & Shumaker, 2014) have most commonly made use of quantitative methods. As this research aims at gaining insight into the individual's experiences and sense making of providing support, the method applied to this study is qualitative semi-structured interviews. Thus, it contributes to the research within the field of social anxiety and friendships with a qualitative methodology.
5. **Aims and objectives** (expected and desired outcomes of the research; expected impact of the research): The study aims at gaining insight into the experiences and sense making of friends providing support for friends with social anxiety. The research takes the perspective of the friends who provide support and examines how they experience the friendship with a young person with social anxiety. The research aims at understanding how young people provide support for each other, how they experience providing support and what meaning they ascribe to it. Furthermore, the research investigates if the anxiety disorder affects the friendship and the friend him/herself, and if so, how it affects the friendship and the friend. Furthermore, the research aims at broadening the research on the experiences of friends in general because very little research have studied friends in their own right.
6. **Research questions/hypotheses** (what you expect to learn): The study aims at answering the research question, how do friends experience and make sense of providing support for friends with social anxiety?
7. **Procedure** (provide a summary of how you will conduct the research. More detailed responses should be given in the appropriate sections of the form, you may refer to them here): The research will be conducted as a qualitative research. Individual semi-structured interviews will take place with 6-10 participants. Data derived from the interviews will be used to analyse how these young people make sense of providing support for their friend. IPA will be used to analyse the data.
8. **Proposed timetable for research** (include deadlines for data collection and contingency plans) : When ethical approval has been given, recruitment of participants and data collection (interviews) will be conducted from February – May 2016. The introduction and methodology of the study will also be written in this period of time. The analysis is expected to be conducted from May – July 2016. The write up of the research will take place from July – October 2016.  
Contingency plan: In case no participants show interest in the research project from recruiting through posters on the University of Chester Parkgate Road campus, participants will be recruited via social networks, such as Facebook. The research will still remain qualitative and use interviews. If no participants show interest in the research on Facebook, another option is collecting data from online forums. Forums, where data might be collected, could be <http://www.socialanxietysupport.com/forum/> but this forum is for people with social anxiety to discuss their experiences on anything from relationships to medication, and not for friends. There are very little information on what friends can do for a friend with social anxiety but every webpage regarding social anxiety give a little information and tell the friends not to carry the burden alone but talk to someone about it, either a counsellor, friends or family. There does not seem to be any support groups or online support groups for friends of people with social anxiety. The research aim and question might be slightly altered if this is the case. If no participants show interest in the original research with individual semi-structured interviews, then ethical approval will be applied for anew to carry out a research with either of the abovementioned approaches.

9. Describe any risk of physical harm or psychological distress to participants, however minor, in the recruitment process, during data collection or post data collection. Provide details of how you will minimise and manage any issues. You must include details of your debrief procedures here: The interview might evoke reflections on the friendship, which the participant might have been unaware of previous to the interview. It can be thoughts or feelings of being inadequate in relation to providing support and these have been taken into consideration here. Participants might experience psychological distress, if:
- They find it difficult to provide support for their friend. E.g. they do not know how to provide support or they have experienced that the support they provided was not sufficient to help their friend.
  - The friendship have suffered because of the social anxiety, e.g. the friends do not talk to, interact with or see their friend as much as they used too and it makes them feel sad or worried.
  - They succeed at providing support for their friend but forget to take care of themselves in the process and this makes the friendship, as well as the every day life for the friend providing support, difficult.

Psychological distress will be minimised by briefing participants before the interview starts. This information will be similar to that presented to participants in the participant information sheet. The brief will include an explanation of the purpose of the interview and the research project. It will also include information about withdrawal. The interviewer will mention again that the interview is being recorded for the purpose of analysis. Participants will then be asked to sign the consent form (which the interviewer has printed) if they still wish to participate in the project. Participants will then be asked if they have any questions about the research project before the interview starts.

If participants feel distressed doing the interview itself, the researcher will stop the interview for participants to have a moment. Participants will then be asked if they wish to continue the interview or not. Do they not wish to continue, the interview will be stopped and data collected will not be used for analysis.

The debrief procedures include: The interview will end with the researcher asking participants if they still feel comfortable that their interview will be used in the research project. The researcher will also ask whether participants have anything they would like to add, discuss or talk about that the researcher has not touched upon during the interview. The researcher will also let the participant know that if they experience any distress after the interview they can use sources on the participant information sheet, also printed for the occasion. Participants will be thanked for their participation.

10. Is there any deception involved in the study?

☒ No

☐ Yes → Justify use of deception and provide debrief details: *Click here to enter text.*

## F. SAMPLE SIZE, PARTICIPANTS AND RECRUITMENT

*If you are utilising internet mediated data collection methods you must consult the relevant guidelines, consider them in this section and make your procedure clear, particularly for questions 20-24.*

11. Who do you intend to recruit for participation in your study?

☐ No recruitment

↳ ☐ Pre-existing data    ☐ Media/online-media based research (eg: forums)    ☐ Other → Explain: *Click here to enter text.*

☒ Human participants

☐ Non-human animal subjects OR Both non-human animal subjects and human participants

↳ If during the course of the research the costs to the individual animal/s rose above that expected, describe the point at which you would remove the animal from the research. *Click here to enter text.*

↳ Once the animal has been removed from the research describe how any distress and harm caused will be dealt with. *Click here to enter text.*

↳ If you are working with both human and non-human animal participants and during the course of the research the costs to the individual animal/s rose above that expected and were removed from the research is there any likely

distress caused to the human participant? Explain and give details of how you will minimise harm and distress:

*Click here to enter text.*

☐ Combination of the following: Check all that apply

↳ ☐ Pre-existing data ☐ Media/online-media based ☐ Other → Explain: *Click here to enter text.*

☐ Human participants ☐ Non-human animal subjects OR Both non-human animal subjects and human participants

**12. What is the sample size for your study?** (If you are a UG or PGT student you should discuss this with your supervisor.. If you are using pre-existing data or online/media based research, give details of the type and size of sample eg: number of participants; number, type and extract length of interviews/case studies/articles/programmes/films). 6-10 participants (Eatough, Smith, & Shaw, 2008; Fox, Larkin, & Leung, 2011; Smith & Osborn, 2007) will be recruited for the purpose of participating in an interview about their friendship experiences with a young person suffering from social anxiety. Participants will be recruited through advertising at the University of Chester, for example in the canteen, in the SU and the library. It will be in the form of small posters or A4 papers, where a clear and easy understanding of the study's purpose and the role of the participants will be explained. There will also be given contact information for the participants to contact the researcher by mail if interested (see Appendix A). This method is chosen in the hope that participants volunteer because they find the project interesting and would like to share their experiences, and not because they are missing credits in RPS.

**13. Was a statistical/power analysis conducted to determine the adequate sample?**

☐ Yes → give details *Click here to enter text.*

☒ No → describe how you determined the sample size (where appropriate you should refer to Section E) The chosen method and theory used to collect and analyse data, IPA, determined the adequate sample size. IPA is ideographic and interested in the particular case of the individual and his/her experiences and sense making of these experiences. A smaller sample size is therefore often used because it allows the researcher to go into depth with the individual's experiences in the analysis (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2007). Later in the analysis, nuances and similarities between the 6-10 cases will be studied but the aim of IPA is not to generalize the findings (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

**14. Where will the proposed recruitment and/or data collection take place?** (If you are using pre-existing data/on line/media based research you should still indicate a location and consider related health and safety issues and issues of data protection and storage in relevant sections of this form). Check all that apply

☒ A University of Chester campus → Give details: *Recruitment of participants through posters placed on the University of Chester campus, such as the canteens, the SU, the library, bathrooms. Data collection will take place on university in a room hired to conduct the individual interviews.*

☐ Online (including RPS) → *Before you continue, consult BPS guidelines for internet mediated research and you must provide appropriate details in relevant sections: E.g. participant information, informed consent, withdrawal procedures etc.*

☐ Other site(s) → Give details: *Click here to enter text.*

**15. Have health and safety issues been adequately considered?** *Click here to enter text.*

☐ I am a UG or PGT student using pre-existing data and I have attended the recommended health and safety briefing.

☐ Yes → Office use only: *Confirmation of attendance* Y ☐ N ☐

☐ No → Explain why & provide details of alternative arrangements & considerations *Click here to enter text.*

☒ I am a UG or PGT student collecting data from human participants and/or non-human animal subjects and I have attended the recommended Health and Safety briefing.

☒ Yes → *Confirmation of attendance* Y ☐ N ☐

☐ No → Explain why and provide details of alternative arrangements and considerations *Click here to enter text.*

☐ I am a member of staff/PGT student and I have attached a risk assessment form. *Attach suitable documentary evidence of permission. If you have not attached documentary evidence explain why.* *Click here to enter text.*

**16. Is permission to recruit potential participants/subjects required from an organisation other than the University of Chester?**

☐ Yes → Explain: *Click here to enter text.* *Attach suitable documentary evidence of permission. If you have not attached documentary evidence explain why.* *Click here to enter text.*



☒ No → Explain: Does not apply.

**17. Will participants fall into any of the following special groups?**

- ☐ Schoolchildren (under 16 yrs of age)
- ☐ People with learning or communication difficulties
- ☐ Patients/clients
- ☐ People in custody
- ☐ People engaged in illegal activities (e.g. drug-taking)

↳ If any of the above boxes are checked consult BPS guidelines on the protection of vulnerable persons. If you are a student, consult with your supervisor before continuing with your application.

☒ None of the above → Go to Q18

If you are working with vulnerable persons, ascertain whether it is necessary to obtain satisfactory DBS clearance (or equivalent for overseas students) for all applicants who will be in contact with vulnerable persons, then check one of the following:

- ☐ DBS clearance obtained and shown to supervisor.
- ☐ DBS clearance is not necessary → Explain: Click here to enter text.

Attach suitable documentary evidence. If you have not attached evidence explain why. Click here to enter text.

**18. Describe how your sample will be identified and how you obtained contact information.** Contact will be obtained through posters on the University of Chester Parkgate Road campus. Participants will respond to the poster by email, if they identify with the criteria, so if they are in a friendship with someone with social anxiety. Contact will be maintained through email, where participant information sheet and consent form will be sent out prior to the interview. Participants are welcome to email the researcher at any time during the process to ask questions about the study.

**19. Indicate the types of recruitment to be used** and attach copies of all materials. If you have not attached evidence explain why. See Appendix A: Posters. Check all that apply.

Do you need permission to contact potential participants and/or display material?

☐ No ☒ Yes Explain and give details: Permission from staff at the university where posters will be put up.

- ☐ I am using pre-existing/online/on-line media based data → Go to Section G
- ☐ I am using non-human animal subjects and I have completed Q18. → Go to Section G
- ☐ I am using human and non-human animal subjects and I have completed Q18 and provided information below.
- ☐ RPS Ensure you have the required number of records
- ☐ Letters/emails to potential participants
- ☐ Social media Ensure you have consulted BPS guidelines for internet mediated research and you must provide appropriate details in relevant sections
- ☒ Flyers/posters/brochures
- ☐ Verbal script (face-to-face or telephone recruitment)
- ☐ Websites
- ☐ Powerpoint presentation
- ☐ Newspaper/magazine advertisements ☐ Radio/tv advertisements
- ☐ Other Click here to enter text.

**20. Indicate if this research exclude any persons from the participation or analysis stage on the basis of:**

- ☐ Gender ☐ Ethnicity ☐ Age ☐ Sexual orientation ☐ Mental health issues ☐ Specific learning difficulties
- ☐ Physical factors (e.g. physical ability, visual acuity, language/accent, handedness etc)
- ☐ Other Click here to enter text.

a) If you are excluding any participants on the basis of any of the above categories, please justify their exclusion and discuss how any issues of distress and/or embarrassment arising from the exclusion will be minimised, monitored and managed during this process. Click here to enter text.

No exclusions apply ☒ → Go to Q21

**21. Will potential participants be asked any screening questions to determine whether they will be recruited?**

- ☒ No → Go to Q22
- ☐ Yes → Explain and describe how you will minimise, monitor and manage any issues of distress and embarrassment: Click here to enter text.

**22. How will informed consent be sought?** Informed consent will be sought in the format of a consent form, which participants will sign before the interview will take place. Participants will have received participant information and consent form via email one week before the interview will take place so they can familiarize themselves with the study and the consent form. Researcher will bring a consent form to the interview, which participants can sign if they still wish to participate in the study. Do they no longer wish to participate, withdrawal is possible up until the end of the interview. (see Appendix B).

**23. How will anonymity and confidentiality be maintained during recruitment and data collection?** During recruitment, the researchers email will be given to participants, which no one else than the researcher has access to. Email is locked with username and password so no one else will be able to get participant's real names and personal information. During data collection, the recordings of the interview will be called Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.. However, participants can

be recognised from the audio but audio recordings will be kept safe on the researchers personal log in on a university computer. Participants will be given pseudonyms as soon as transcription of the interview begins. Pseudonyms will be used throughout the following analysis and write up of the project. Any names, locations, places, cities etc., which can be linked to participants will be anonymised in transcriptions.

**24. How will participants be able to withdraw from data collection?** *Participants can withdraw up until the end of the interview.*

↳ Is there a time limit for withdrawal? Explain: Yes, there is a time limit for withdrawal. Participants will be able to withdraw up until the end of the interview. At the end of the interview, participants will be asked if they still wish to have their interview be part of the research. A time limit for withdrawal has been decided to avoid that the researcher will write up the analysis and participants then wants their part of the data removed from the research project.

↳ What will happen to any partially collected data? Explain: Any partially collected data collected up until the end of the interview will be removed from the research and disposed of, if participants choose to withdraw before the end of the interview. Any collected data after the end of interviews will not be removed or disposed of but used in the research. The end of the interview marks the time when researcher and participant separate after the interview, so when they go home.

**25. What is the time commitment expected of participants?** *Time commitment expected of participants is between 45-60 minutes to participate in the interview. 10-15 minutes to familiarize oneself with the participant information sheet and the consent form (prior to interview) is also expected. Also, any travels to/from the university where interviews will take place.*

**26. Indicate the type and amount of compensation participants will receive.** ☒ None

Amount value: *Click here to enter text.* ☐ Money: ☐ Gift certificate: ☐ Travel Expenses: ☐ Other: Explain: *Click here to enter text.*

27. Indicate where the following information will be available to participants. Attach documentary evidence Check all that apply.

	<u>Information sheet</u>	<u>Letter</u>	<u>Email</u>	<u>Email info. page</u>	<u>Consent Form</u>	<u>PowerPoint</u>	<u>N/A</u>
Brief details about the purpose of the study	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contact details for further information	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explanation of how and why participant has been chosen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Notification that materials/interviews are not diagnostic tools/therapy or used for staff review/development purposes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explanation participation is voluntary	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Details of any incentives or compensation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Details of how consent will be obtained	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If research is observational, consent to being observed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Details of procedure so participants are informed about what to expect	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Details of time commitments expected	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Details of any stimuli used	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Explanation of right to withdraw and right to withdraw procedure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Option for omitting questions participant does not wish to answer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Procedure regarding partially completed questionnaires or interviews	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
With interviews, information regarding time limit for withdrawal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Details of any advantages and benefits of taking part	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Details of any disadvantages and risks of taking part	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information that data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, those data will not be identifiable as theirs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Debriefing details	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dissemination information	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Further information (relevant literature; support networks etc)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you have checked n/a for any of the above, provide further details: *Participants will not be given information on incentives because incentives are not used in the research. The research is not observational so there is no need for participants to consent to being observed. The research does not include any stimuli used during interviews so no details of stimuli will be given to participants.*

Ensure you have provided further details regarding the above in the relevant sections of the form and attached any necessary documentation. If you have not attached the necessary documentation explain why.

## G. DATA COLLECTION

28. Indicate the types of data collection methods that will be used [Attach copies of all materials \(where appropriate\)](#)

Check all that apply

- ☐ I am using pre-existing data and have indicated all the original methods of data collection below.
  - ☐ Online/online-media based research [answer 28\(a\) and \(b\)](#)
  - ☐ Observations Diaries/Journals completed by researcher [attach any instructions given to participants and any multi-media stimuli](#)  
[answer 28\(a\) and \(b\)](#)
  - ☐ Observations Diaries/Journals completed by participants [attach any instructions given to participant and any multi-media stimuli](#)  
[answer 28\(a\) and \(b\)](#)
  - ☐ Questionnaires/Surveys [attach version of questionnaire that will be used in study, answer 28\(a\) and \(b\)](#)
  - ☒ Individual interviews [attach list of questions/topics and any multi-media stimuli, answer 28\(a\) and \(b\)](#)
  - ☐ Focus groups [attach list of questions/topics and any multi-media stimuli, answer 28\(a\) and \(b\)](#)
  - ☐ Biological specimens (e.g. blood, urine) Go to Q29
  - ☐ Biomedical devices (e.g. Biopac) Go to Q29
  - ☐ Cognitive measures (e.g. Reaction time, accuracy, recognition) [attach copies of stimuli and answer 28\(a\) and \(b\)](#)
  - ☐ Multimedia stimuli [attach original material \(where appropriate\) URL links to other relevant information, and answer 28\(a\) and \(b\)](#)
    - ↳ ☐ Video/DVD
      - ☐ Online/video gaming footage
      - ☐ Web sites/On-line forums
      - ☐ Written text (e.g. newspapers, magazine, books, transcriptions, scenarios, vignettes)
      - ☐ Audio (e.g. radio broadcasts, recordings)
      - ☐ Still images
      - ☐ Stimuli made from recordings of other persons that are not in the public domain (e.g. personal photographs, video/audio recordings)
        - ↳ If stimuli are identifiable, [obtain consent for their use, attach evidence of consent](#)
- a) Does the content of the material contain anything that could cause distress or alarm and/or involve sex, violence, substance abuse, profanity, impudence or other types of mature content? [Fully consider the suitability of the stimuli and the possible impact on the participant/researcher, attach original material \(where appropriate\) URL links to other relevant information](#)
- ☐ No → Briefly describe the content: [Click here to enter text.](#)
- ☐ Yes
- ↳ Is the material from a source that has been given a universally acceptable certification OR has the source been considered by an appropriate agency with regard to suitability for audiences in terms of its ability to cause distress or alarm and/or in terms of content issues involving sex, violence, substance abuse, profanity, impudence and other types of mature content? (eg: material used by multi national media organisations and widely accessible by general audiences)
- ☐ Yes → Provide details and justify the use of the material. Explain how you will minimise, monitor and manage any issues of distress to the participant and/or researcher [Click here to enter text.](#)
- ☐ No/not sure → Explain, provide details and justify the use of the material. Explain how you will minimise, monitor and manage any issues of distress to the participant and/or researcher.
- b) Once data collection is complete what action will be taken to ensure that participants and/or researchers leave the research in a positive frame of mind? [Click here to enter text.](#)

29. How will you collect your data? Check all that apply

- ☐ I am conducting an experiment [Provide full procedural details Click here to enter text.](#)
- ☐ I am using observations/diaries/journals [Provide full procedural details Click here to enter text.](#)
- ☒ I am conducting surveys/interviews/focus groups [Provide full procedural details Data will be collected through qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews. The interview will consist of questions presented in the Appendix C: Interview Schedule.](#)
- ☐ I am conducting internet based research [Provide full procedural details Click here to enter text.](#)
- ☐ I am conducting media based research [Provide full procedural details Click here to enter text.](#)
- ☐ I am using pre-existing data. [Provide full details of how the data was originally collected making specific reference to key ethical considerations of management of harm & distress, consent, anonymity & confidentiality Click here to enter text.](#)

30. Will you make any recordings of human participants? (interview/focus groups, observations, images of participants' bodies)  
☒ Yes → Go to question 31    ☐ No → Go to section H

31. What will be recorded? Check all that apply  
☒ Interview   ☐ Focus Group   ☐ Images of participants' bodies   ☐ Observations   ☐ Other → Explain: [Click here to enter text.](#)

32. How will the data be recorded? Check all that apply  
☐ Video   ☒ Audio   ☐ Photographs   ☐ Written transcripts   ☐ Other → Explain: [Click here to enter text.](#)

33. Can participants' identities be determined from the recording? (If the recording is a facial photograph/video or audio recording of a voice, the correct answer is 'yes'.)  
☐ No  
☒ Yes → Describe how you will protect privacy and anonymity during transcription and analysis. Participants' identities can be determined from the recording but privacy and anonymity will be protected during transcription and analysis by giving participants pseudonyms. Also, any personal details that the interview might contain, such as mentions of friends or family names, places, schools or cities that can be linked to the participant will be left out of the analysis and marked as 'xxx' in transcription. When transcribing the interviews, the researcher will listen to them on the university computer but with headphones to make sure no one else will listen to the interviews.

34. Will the recordings be destroyed? NOTE: Participants must consent to their recordings being retained/archived.  
☒ Yes → Explain how and when *The research/dissertation will be expected finished and handed in October 12, 2016, and recordings will be retained/archived until January 2017 where degree results for the dissertation have been received. All recordings are stored on a university computer at the University of Chester and will be deleted once results have been received.*  
☐ No → Justify retaining the recordings [and attach evidence of consent](#): [Click here to enter text.](#)

35. Will the recordings be used outside of this research study? NOTE: Participants must consent to all outside uses of their recordings.  
☐ Yes → Answer Question 36 [and attach evidence of consent](#)  
☒ No → Go to Section H

36. How will the recordings be used outside of this research study? Check all that apply  
☐ Shared with other researchers not listed on this application: Explain: [Click here to enter text.](#)  
☐ Used for research dissemination (conferences, journals, media publications, consultancy) [Click here to enter text.](#)  
☐ Used for educational purposes (e.g. training, teaching): Explain: [Click here to enter text.](#)  
☐ Used within a commercial/public organisation: Explain: [Click here to enter text.](#)  
☐ Other → Explain: [Click here to enter text.](#)

37. When the recordings are used outside of this research study, will they contain identifiable information (e.g. names, facial photographs/video, unmodified voices)?  
☐ No  
☐ Yes  
    ↪ Will disclosure of participants' identity outside this research study reasonably place participants at risk for criminal or civic liability or be damaging to participants' financial standing, employability or reputation?  
        ☐ Yes → Explain why it is necessary to disclose participants' identity: [Click here to enter text.](#)  
        ☐ No → Go to Section H

## H. DATA ANALYSIS

38. **Describe your methods of data analysis:** The data will be analysed using IPA to gain insight into how participants experience and make sense of providing support. An IPA analysis consists of six stages, which will be applied to all cases individually. The first stage consists of familiarizing oneself with the transcripts by reading and re-reading them, while taking notes. The second stage is of a more exploratory level where more interpretative notes with more specific themes and psychological concepts are applied to the transcript. In the third stage, data is reduced to emergent themes, which then leads to the development of super-ordinate themes in stage four. Moving on to analysing the second case in stage five, the second case will be analysed in its own right. Ideas and concepts emerged from the first case will therefore be bracketed. In stage six, the researcher looks for patterns across the cases (Eatough, Smith, & Shaw, 2008; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). An IPA analysis will therefore allow in-depth insight into the experiences of the participants.

## I. DATA PROTECTION AND STORAGE

39. **Where and in what form will the research materials be stored?** Describe fully the storage process during collection, analysis and archiving and consider issues of security.: During collection, interview will be recorded and stored on a Dictaphone. After the interviews have been recorded, recordings will be moved onto a university computer at the University of Chester, which is safer than the researchers own laptop. The recordings are saved on the researchers private university drive, can only be accessed via the researchers private log in details, and therefore will not be accessible if the computer gets stolen. The recordings will be transcribed on the university computer as well. The researcher will wear headphones when transcribing.  
During analysis and archiving, research materials, such as recordings and transcriptions of the interviews, will be restored on the university computer. Transcripts will also be printed in hard copy for the researcher to work through them during analysis but transcripts will be anonymised at this point so no one can identify the participants if transcripts got lost or stolen.

40. **Will the research materials be destroyed on completion of the project?**

☒ Yes → Explain how and when: The research materials will be destroyed after a final result of the dissertation has been received in January 2017. All research materials, such as recordings and transcriptions of the interviews, will be deleted from university computer. Materials will be made sure to be deleted from the bin on the computer as well.  
☐ No → Explain why the materials need to be maintained: *Click here to enter text.*

41. **Will the research materials include any identifying information (e.g. names, telephone numbers)?**

☒ No  
☐ Yes → Describe the type of information and justify why it will be retained: *Click here to enter text.*  
↳ Will the identifying information be deleted?  
☐ Yes → State when and justify the retention of the information until this time: *Click here to enter text.*  
☐ No → Justify the retention of the information: *Click here to enter text.*

## J. DISSEMINATION

42. **How will the research results be shared?**

☒ Academic assessment (e.g. dissertation; assignment report) Explain and give details: *The research will be assessed academically as a dissertation project.*  
☐ Academic dissemination (e.g. Journal publication; conferences) (If you are an UG or PGT student you must discuss this with your supervisor before checking this box). Explain and give details: *Click here to enter text.*  
☐ Non-Academic dissemination (e.g. printed/online article) (If you are an UG or PGT student you must discuss this with your supervisor before checking this box). Explain and give details: *Click here to enter text.*  
☐ Academic learning & teaching (e.g. class based research exercise) Explain and give details: *Click here to enter text.*

☐ Consultancy (If you are an UG or PGT student you must discuss this with your supervisor before checking this box).

Explain and give details: [Click here to enter text.](#)

☐ Commercial/public sector. ( If you are an UG or PGT student you must discuss this with your supervisor before checking this box). Explain and give details: [Click here to enter text.](#)

☐ Other (If you are an UG or PGT student you must discuss this with your supervisor before checking this box).

Explain and give details: [Click here to enter text.](#)

**43. How will privacy and confidentiality be maintained during dissemination?** *Privacy and confidentiality will be maintained during dissemination by anonymising names of participants, locations, places, cities and people mentioned in the interviews in the project.*

**44. Are there any specific considerations about sharing the research?** (eg: Is the data from friends and family and potentially embarrassing/upsetting for someone who reads it? Is the data relating to employee satisfaction/wellbeing and likely to be seen by senior staff?). *No, there is not.*

YOU HAVE NOW COMPLETED THE APPLICATION FORM. PLEASE READ AND SIGN THE FOLLOWING DECLARATION:

*I confirm that I have familiarised myself with the regulatory codes and codes of conduct and ethics relevant to my area of research, including those of relevant professional organisations and ensure that the research which I propose is designed to comply with such codes.*

*I have familiarised myself with the following:*

*Department of Psychology Ethical Approval for Research: Procedural Guidelines.*

*University of Chester Research Governance Handbook*

*BPS Code of Ethics*

*BPS Code of Human Research Ethics*

*BPS Guidelines for Internet-mediated Research*

*BPS Research Guidelines and Policy Documents*

*I confirm I understand that:*

*All applications must be submitted according to the guidelines set out, assessed by at least 2 reviewers and are subject to discussion by departmental ethics committee. Data collection is not permitted until applications have been approved. Collecting data without ethical approval is a serious breach of the BPS Code of Ethics.*

*Any change of plans to the research after the approval MUST be discussed by ethics committee. chair's action may be taken for minor changes.*

*Print the completed form off onto BLUE paper with the appendices on white paper. Handwritten applications are not accepted. Submit to the department office by the agreed deadline. Applications submitted after this deadline will not be processed until the following committee meeting.*

*If you are a member of staff or a PGR student, in addition to 2 paper copies you MUST submit an electronic version to [c.leach@chester.ac.uk](mailto:c.leach@chester.ac.uk)*

DATE: 09/02/2016

PRINT NAME:

SIGNATURE:

**NOTES ON THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY ETHICS COMMITTEE.**

- All decisions of the committee are based on the application form and reviewers comments ONLY. Forms should be as detailed and clear as possible. Verbal discussions are not considered as part of the application or review process.
- The review process strictly adheres to the University of Chester Research Governance Handbook and the BPS Code of Ethics.
- The decision of the committee is final. If you are a UG, PGT or PGR student you should discuss the decision of the committee with your supervisor. If you are a member of staff you may contact the chair of the committee for further clarification.



ETHICS COMMITTEE DATE : Click here to enter a date.

CHAIRS COMMENTS: Click here to enter text.

Please address reviewers comments.

- Contingency - Recruiting through social media is an option with telephone interviews.
- clarify whether formal diagnosis of social anxiety is needed.
- Identify consistent end point for withdrawal.

☐ **ACCEPTABLE**

Action: You may now commence with data collection subject to approval from any relevant external agencies.

**DATA COLLECTION IS NOT PERMISSABLE UNDER THESE CONDITIONS**

☒ **ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO SUBMISSION OF AMENDMENT FORM**

☒ Acceptable subject to conditions listed by chair. Discuss conditions highlighted with supervisor and submit ethics application amendment form direct to office.

☐ Acceptable subject to conditions listed by chair: Submit ethics application amendment form direct to office.

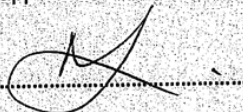
☐ **ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS LISTED BY CHAIR:**

Action: Resubmit application for full review ensuring you have completed section B

☐ **REVISE AND RESUBMIT:**

Action: Resubmit application for full review ensuring you have completed section B

SIGNATURE: .....



Office Use Only

DOPEC NUMBER

# Are you a friend of someone who has social anxiety?



University of  
Chester

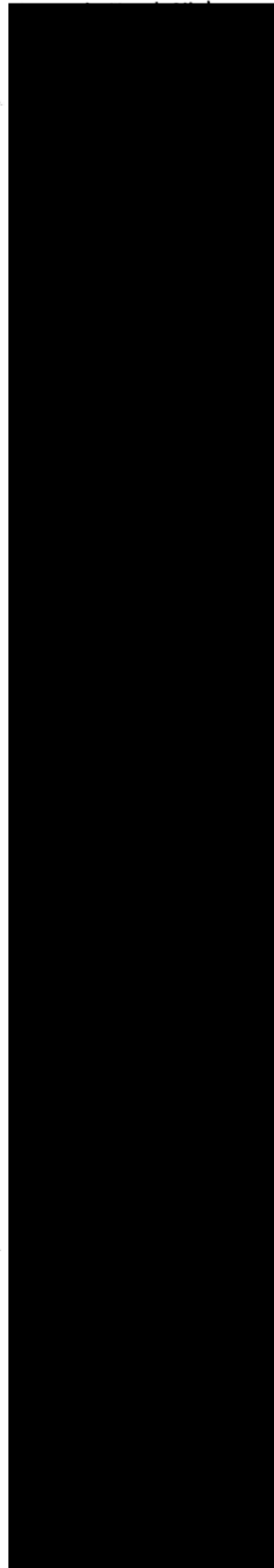
*Would you be interested in talking about your  
experiences of the friendship?*

This research focuses on **your experiences** and aims to understand how young people experience being in a friendship with someone who has social anxiety and how they **provide support** for their friend.

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You will share your experience in an individual interview that will last about an hour and take place at the University of Chester Parkgate Road campus.

Are you interested or have any questions, feel free to contact me, [redacted] on [redacted] or grab a tab below with my contact details.



**Appendix B: Consent form**



**University of  
Chester**

**Title of project:** How do friends make sense of providing support

**Researcher:** [REDACTED] Family and Child MSc student, University of Chester

Please tick the boxes if you agree.

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet and the study.  
I have also had time to ask questions. ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from  
the study up until the end of my interview. ☐
3. I understand that the interview is not therapeutic and I know where to seek help  
and support if needed. ☐
4. I consent to my interview being audio recorded and that the recordings will be used  
for analysis and retained until final marks have been received in January 2017. ☐
5. I understand that the results of this research might be published and that I will  
remain anonymous. ☐
6. I agree to take part in the study. ☐

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date signed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date signed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the researcher

## **Appendix C: Interview schedule**

Please talk as widely as possible about your experiences.

Will you, to begin with, tell me a bit about yourself?

*Possible prompts:* How old are you? What do you do?

Could you tell me about how you became friends with your friend who has social anxiety?

*Possible prompts:* How long have you been friends? Where did you meet? How long has your friend had social anxiety? How long have you known?

Could you tell me about what your friendship is like?

*Possible prompts:* How would you describe it? Close friends? Do you see each other often?

Can you tell me about what you do with your friend in your free time?

*Possible prompts:* Has this changed from what you did before? Are there things you can/cannot do together?

Can you describe an experience where you provided support for your friend?

*Possible prompts:* What did you do? Did it help? How did it make you feel?

Can you tell me about what place the anxiety has in your friendship at the moment?

*Possible prompts:* Have you become closer? Have you become less close?

Can you tell me about how you experience providing support?

*Possible prompts:* How does it make you feel? Do you feel able to help? Is it difficult?

Is there anything else that I haven't covered that you wish to discuss?

Do you have any questions?

Thank for participating!

## **Appendix D: Participant information sheet**

### ***How do friends make sense of providing support? Participant information sheet***

You are being invited to take part in a research, which functions as the data collection of a dissertation project. Please take your time to read through this participant information sheet to gain information on the research. Do not hesitate to contact the researcher if you have any questions or concerns regarding the research. Take your time to discuss the research with friends, relatives or others if needed and decide whether or not you wish to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form. Regarding any dissemination of the dissertation project, anonymity and confidentiality of participants will be maintained. Thank you for reading this.

**What is the aim of the research?** The research project aims at understanding how young people experience being friends with someone who has social anxiety. It focuses on how friends provide support for a friend with social anxiety, what it means to the friends to provide this support and how they provide it. The aim of this research is therefore to gain an insight into the experiences of a young person in a friendship with someone with social anxiety.

**Why have I been chosen?** You have identified yourself as a friend of someone with social anxiety (who is not a sibling or family member) and you want to share your thoughts and experiences on this friendship.

**What is my part in the research?** Your part in the research is to share your experiences of being friends with a friend with social anxiety. You will be asked questions to share your view, thoughts and experiences as widely as possible. If there are questions you wish not to answer during the interview, let the researcher know and the question will be omitted from the interview.

**How is confidentiality and anonymity maintained?** No names or other personal details that could link back to you and others involved or mentioned during the interview will be shared in the research. All participants will be given pseudonyms to maintain anonymity and confidentiality.

**What happens to the data collected?** The researcher will use the data from the interview to conduct an analysis of how friends make sense of providing support for their friends with social anxiety. Along with your interview, 6-10 participants will contribute in interviews to the data collection. Note, that interviews will be recorded and later transcribed for use in analysis.

**How long will my data be retained?** Your data will be retained until the final marks of the dissertation have been received. Marks are expected received in January 2017. After this date, all data will be deleted.

**Can I withdraw from the research if I change my mind?** Participation is voluntary. You can withdraw from the research up until the end of the interview. At the end of the interview, you will be asked if you still feel comfortable that your interview will be used in the research. If you say yes, the interview will be used for analysis and withdrawal is no longer possible. If you say no, your interview will not be used. A time limit for withdrawal has been made to make sure that data collected and used for analysis can not be withdrawn when the analysis has begun or when the dissertation has been handed in.

**Are there any risks in being involved?** You might feel a slight discomfort if the experiences you have had have been difficult. Therefore, take time to decide whether or not your thoughts and experiences are something you feel comfortable sharing with the researcher.

**What are the advantages of being involved?** The interview is all about you and your experiences and it can be enjoyable to have time to talk and reflect upon yourself. It is important to mention that the research is not a therapeutic session.

**What is the duration of the research?** The interview is set to take between 45-70 minutes dependent on the individual interview.

**Where does the research take place?** The research will take place at the University of Chester in building [to be confirmed], room [to be confirmed].

#### **Contact details and information**

Family and Child Psychology MSc student at the University of Chester

email:

Supervisor, Hannah Heath: [h.heath@chester.ac.uk](mailto:h.heath@chester.ac.uk)

#### **Sources of help and support:**

Should you feel any discomfort or distress before, during or after participating in the research, please find help and support in sources given here.

If you are a student at the University of Chester, you might want to talk to your PAT or the Student Support Service in Binks building on Parkgate Road campus – [student.welfare@chester.ac.uk](mailto:student.welfare@chester.ac.uk). If you experience greater concerns after participation, you might want to consider involving your GP.

If you are not a student at the university, please contact your GP if you feel any distress.

If you wish to find out more about social anxiety and anxiety in general, you can visit websites:

- <https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk> Under Get Help Now, go to Anxiety Information to gain information on anxiety in young people.
- <https://www.mind.org> Under Information and Support go to Types of mental health problems to find advice for friends and family on how to support someone with anxiety.

## Appendix E: Reference list for ethics form

- Eatough, V., Smith, J. A., & Shaw, R. (2008). Women, anger, and aggression. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 23(12), 1767.  
<http://dx.doi:10.1177/0886260508314932>
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<http://dx.doi:10.1080/09638239817761>
- Hughes, N., Locock, L., & Ziebland, S. (2013). Personal identity and the role of 'carer' among relatives and friends of people with multiple sclerosis. *Social Science & Medicine*, 96(100), 78-85.  
<http://dx.doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2013.07.023>
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- Rodebaugh, T. L., Lim, M. H., Fernandez, K. C., Langer, J. K., Weisman, J. S., Tonge, N., Shumaker, E. A. (2014). Self and friend's differing views of social anxiety disorder's effects on friendships. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 123(4), 715.  
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- Van Zalk, N., & van Zalk, M. (2015). The importance of perceived care and connectedness with friends and parents for adolescent social anxiety. *Journal of Personality*, 83(3), 346-360.  
<http://dx.doi:10.1111/jopy.12108>



**A) Applicant and submission details**

Name of applicant: [REDACTED]

Project title: How do friends make sense of providing support?

Applicant status: ☐ Staff → Go to Section B. Application should follow the procedure for full review.  
☐ PGR ☐ UG ☒ PGT

If you are the applicant's supervisor, have you discussed ethical issues with the applicant?

☒ Yes, the applicant is an UG/PGT student and I wish to send the application for accelerated student review.  
☐ Yes, the applicant is an UG/PGT student and I wish to send the application for full review.  
☐ Yes, the applicant is a PGR student and I wish to send the application for full review.  
☐ No → Comments:

**B) Review of application**

**1. Has the applicant signed and dated the form?**

- a) ☒ Yes → Go to Q2 ☐ No → Return to applicant for signature before continuing with review process.

**2. What is the submission type?**

- a) ☒ First submission to this or any other committee
- b) ☐ Resubmission of a rejected application by this committee  
↳ Is there a summary of the requirements of the committee? Is the original application attached?:  
☐ Yes ☐ No → Return to applicant for full details
- c) ☐ Revised submission intended to replace an application approved by this committee  
↳ Is the original application attached?: ☐ Yes ☐ No → Return to applicant for full details
- d) ☐ First submission to this committee; has been submitted to another committee.  
↳ Is the original application attached? ☐ Yes ☐ No → Return to applicant for full details

**3. Research Plan and Methodology**

- a) Is the study well formulated in terms of drawing on the relevant literature and is it methodologically, analytically and scientifically sound?  
☒ Yes ☐ No Comments:
- b) Are the timescales provided appropriate?  
☒ Yes ☐ No Comments:
- c) Are there contingency details?  
☒ Yes ☐ No Comments:
- d) Is there consideration of how to minimise, manage and monitor issues of distress and harm, however minor?  
☒ Yes ☐ No Comments:
- e) Are appropriate debrief details provided?  
☒ Yes ☐ No Comments: Covered in the information sheet as no deception occurring.



☒ Yes ☐ No

Comments:

**7. Data Protection and Storage**

- a) Has the applicant provided appropriate details concerning data protection and storage? Have security issues been properly considered?

☒ Yes ☐ No Comments:

**8. Dissemination**

- a) Has the applicant provided appropriate details concerning research dissemination?

☒ Yes ☐ No Comments:

Are there appropriate details regarding how privacy and confidentiality will be maintained during dissemination?

☒ Yes ☐ No Comments:

Are there appropriate details regarding any specific considerations about sharing the research?

☒ Yes ☐ No Comments:

General comments: *A good application which has considered the ethical implications of the study. I think that the student could add detail to the consent form and information sheet identifying a consistent end point for withdrawal, i.e. when the interview is ended, and not at any other point after this, otherwise, a good application*

**Review status**

☐ Staff/PGR for full review

☒ UG/PGT for full review

☒ UG/PGT Chair's action

☐ Work with external agencies

☐ Work with vulnerable participants

☐ Other concerns/discussion points

**NAME:** *Hannah Heath*

☐ Supervisor ☒ Supervisor/Reviewer 1 ☐ Reviewer 2 ☐ Reviewer 3

**DATE:** *12/02/2016*

**Signature:** *Hannah Heath*



University of  
Chester

UNIVERSITY OF CHESTER DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY  
APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL REVIEW FORM

A) Applicant and submission details

Name of applicant: [REDACTED]  
Project title: *How do friends make sense of providing support?*  
Applicant status: ☐ UG ☒ PGT ☐ PGR ☐ Staff  
If you are the applicant's supervisor, have you discussed ethical issues with the applicant?  
☐ Yes, the applicant is an UG/PGT student and I wish to send the application for accelerated student review.  
☐ Yes, the applicant is a UG/PGT student and I wish to send the application for full review.  
☐ Yes, the applicant is a PGR student and I wish to send the application for full review.  
☐ No → Comments: *Click here to enter text.*

B) Review of application

1. Has the applicant signed and dated the form?

- a) ☒ Yes → Go to Q2 ☐ No → Return to applicant for signature before continuing with review process.

2. What is the submission type?

- a) ☒ First submission to this or any other committee
- b) ☐ Resubmission of a rejected application by this committee  
↳ Is there a summary of the requirements of the committee? Is the original application attached?:  
☐ Yes ☐ No → Return to applicant for full details
- c) ☐ Revised submission intended to replace an application approved by this committee  
↳ Is the original application attached?: ☐ Yes ☐ No → Return to applicant for full details
- d) ☐ First submission to this committee; has been submitted to another committee.  
↳ Is the original application attached? ☐ Yes ☐ No → Return to applicant for full details

3. Research Plan and Methodology

- a) Is the study well formulated in terms of drawing on the relevant literature and is it methodologically, analytically and scientifically sound?  
☒ Yes ☐ No Comments: *Click here to enter text.*
- b) Are the timescales provided appropriate?  
☒ Yes ☐ No Comments: *Click here to enter text.*
- c) Are there contingency details?  
☒ Yes ☐ No Comments: *Click here to enter text.*
- d) Is there consideration of how to minimise, manage and monitor issues of distress and harm, however minor?  
☒ Yes ☐ No Comments: *Click here to enter text.*
- e) Are appropriate debrief details provided?  
☒ Yes ☐ No Comments: *Click here to enter text.*

- f) Are appropriate details regarding the use and management of deception provided?  
☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A      Comments: [Click here to enter text.](#)

#### 4. Sample size, participants and recruitment

- a) Has the applicant provided appropriate details of the sample and how it will be identified? (this information will be in Q11, Q12, Q13, Q17, Q18, Q20, Q21)  
☒ Yes ☐ No      Comments: [Click here to enter text.](#)
- b) Has the applicant provided appropriate details of where the research will take place, including issues regarding permission and appropriate health and safety information?. Is the necessary documentation attached?  
☒ Yes ☐ No      Comments: [Click here to enter text.](#)  
If the applicant is a taught student and they did not attend the mandatory H&S briefing have they provided appropriate evidence that they have full and satisfactory awareness of the relevant health and safety protocol?  
☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A      Comments: [Click here to enter text.](#)
- c) Has the applicant provided appropriate details and attached the necessary documentation concerning their recruitment procedures? In particular, have they appropriately considered how to minimise, manage and monitor issues of distress and harm?  
☒ Yes ☐ No      Comments: [Click here to enter text.](#)  
Are there appropriate RPS credits?      ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A
- d) Has the applicant provided appropriate details and attached the necessary documentation concerning the information made available to participants? In particular, are there appropriate considerations if using internet mediated research?  
☒ Yes ☐ No      Comments: [Click here to enter text.](#)  
[Click here to enter text.](#)  
Is there appropriate consideration of how to manage issues of distress and harm?  
☒ Yes ☐ No      Comments: [Click here to enter text.](#)  
Are there appropriate details regarding informed consent?  
☒ Yes ☐ No      Comments: [Click here to enter text.](#)  
Are there appropriate details regarding anonymity and confidentiality?  
☒ Yes ☐ No      Comments: [Click here to enter text.](#)  
Are there appropriate details regarding withdrawal procedures?  
☒ Yes ☐ No      Comments: [Click here to enter text.](#)
- e) Are there appropriate details regarding time commitment from participants?  
☒ Yes ☐ No      Comments: [Click here to enter text.](#)
- f) Are there appropriate details regarding compensation arrangements?  
☒ Yes ☐ No      Comments: [Click here to enter text.](#)

#### 5. Data Collection and Analysis

- a) Has the applicant provided full procedural details and attached the necessary documentation concerning data collection procedures?  
☒ Yes ☐ No      Comments: [Click here to enter text.](#)

**6. Data Analysis**

- a) Has the applicant provided appropriate details concerning data analysis?  
☒ Yes ☐ No      Comments: [Click here to enter text.](#)

**7. Data protection and Storage**

- a) Has the applicant provided appropriate details concerning data protection and storage? Have security issues been properly considered?  
☒ Yes ☐ No      Comments: [Click here to enter text.](#)

**8. Dissemination**

- a) Has the applicant provided appropriate details concerning research dissemination?  
☒ Yes ☐ No      Comments: [Click here to enter text.](#)  
Are there appropriate details regarding how privacy and confidentiality will be maintained during dissemination?  
☒ Yes ☐ No      Comments: [Click here to enter text.](#)  
Are there appropriate details regarding any specific considerations about sharing the research?  
☒ Yes ☐ No      Comments: [Click here to enter text.](#)

General comments: Given the already identified difficulties recruiting via online forums, I would recommend not doing this and having a contingency plan of telephone interviews if face-to-face interviews prove difficult. It might also be worth asking if the diagnosis of social anxiety is formal or informal. Qu5 on the consent form does not apply so should be removed. It is worth stating on the information sheet that there is no compensation for travel to the university, should participants not be students. Need to see the social media recruitment messages.

**Review status**

- ☐ Chair's action  
☐ Staff/PGR for full review      ☒ UG/PGT for full review  
☐ Work with external agencies      ☐ Work with vulnerable participants  
☐ Other issues/concerns [Click here to enter text.](#)

NAME: Janine Carroll

- ☐ Supervisor    ☐ Supervisor/Reviewer 1    ☐ Reviewer 1    ☒ Reviewer 2

DATE: 16/02/2016



## A) Applicant and personnel

Applicant:	[REDACTED]
Project title:	<i>How do friends make sense of providing support</i>
Applicant status:	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff → Go to Section B <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MGR <input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate taught
Supervisor:	<i>Hannah Heath</i>

## B) Declaration

1. ☒ I have submitted an application for ethical approval to the Department of Psychology Ethics Committee and I am required to make the following amendments to my application.  
List the recommendations of the committee.

1. Contingency – Recruiting through social media is an option with telephone interviews.
2. Clarify whether formal diagnosis of social anxiety is needed.
3. Identify consistent end point for withdrawal.
4. Question five on consent form does not apply and should be removed.
5. State on information sheet that there is no compensation for travel for participants.
6. Need to see the social media recruitment messages.

Describe how you have addressed these requirements.

Thank you for your comments on my ethics form. Here is how I have addressed the abovementioned comments:

1. The contingency plan has been addressed and has been changed. In case no participants show interest in the research project from recruiting through posters on the university campus, participants will be recruited via social network, Facebook. The research will still remain qualitative and use interviews. If face-to-face interviews prove difficult, the contingency plan will be to conduct telephone interviews with participants recruited through posters on campus or through social media, Facebook.

2. A formal diagnosis of social anxiety is not needed in order to participate in the research. Participants whose friends have self-identified with social anxiety are as welcome to participate as those who have been clinically diagnosed. I have chosen not to focus solely on diagnosed social anxiety as the research takes a social constructionist point of view. In this view the individual construct and maintain his or her reality through language, actions and interactions with others (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Thus, self-identifying as someone with social anxiety can be seen as affecting the individual's everyday life, social situations, relationships and so forth as much as it does for someone clinically diagnosed, as it becomes the individual's reality.

The research might therefore include participants whose friends have both formal and informal diagnoses of social anxiety. To address this in the research itself, I have added a question in the interview schedule under the second question as a prompt. The question is: "Has your friend been clinically diagnosed with social anxiety?" The question will clarify whether or not the friend has been diagnosed clinically with social anxiety or if they have self-identified as someone with social anxiety.

3. An end point for withdrawal has been addressed and identified. In the consent form under statement

*Dopec Code .*

*ANH4090316*

two, the sentence in italics has been added to clarify the end point to participants: "I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study up until the end of my interview. *I understand that there is no opportunity to withdraw after this point*".

In the participant information sheet, the end point has also been addressed and clarified by adding the sentence shown here in italics: "Can I withdraw from the research if I change my mind? Participation is voluntary. You can withdraw from the research up until the end of the interview. *Withdrawal after this point is not possible.*"

4. Question five on the consent form has been deleted, as it did not apply to this dissertation.

5. In the participant information sheet under the section *Where does the research take place?*, a sentence has been added to state that there is no compensation for travel to and from the university for participants. The sentence has been worded like this: "Unfortunately compensation for travel to and from the university cannot be provided for participants."

6. The recruitment messages, which will be used to recruit participants through the social media, Facebook, (if posters on campus will not work) can be found in Appendix F.

2. ☐ I have submitted an application for ethical approval to the Department of Psychology Ethics Committee that was approved on [Click here to enter a date.](#)  
I wish the committee to consider the following amendments I would like to make to the research plan (attach the original approved application form) [Click here to enter text.](#)

<input type="checkbox"/> I am a member of staff.	Signed: _____	Date: <a href="#">Click here to enter a date.</a>
Print the amendment form on BLUE PAPER and submit to the Dept. Office		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I am an UG/PGT/PGR student.	I have discussed any amendments with my project supervisor.	
Print the amendment form on BLUE PAPER and submit to the Dept. Office		
Signed: _____	Lead Applicant) Date: 06/03/2016	
Supervisor comments:		
I have discussed the recommendations of the committee with the applicant and I am satisfied they have met the stated requirements./I support the amendments to the research plan. (delete as appropriate)		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes Sign and date the form	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Comments: <a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>
I am happy that _____ has addressed all of the issues identified by the committee & I am happy to continue my support.		
Signed: _____	(Supervisor)	Date: 08/3/16



**COMMITTEE COMMENTS:**

☐ **ACCEPTABLE:** You may now commence with data collection subject to approval from any relevant external agencies.

**DATA COLLECTION IS NOT PERMISSABLE UNDER THESE CONDITIONS**

☐ **ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO SUBMISSION OF FURTHER AMENDMENT FORM.**

☐ Acceptable subject to conditions listed by chair. Discuss conditions highlighted with supervisor and submit ethics application amendment form direct to office.

☐ Acceptable subject to conditions listed by chair: Submit ethics application amendment form direct to office.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: Click here to enter a date. 7/31/16

#### **Appendix F: Recruitment messages for Facebook**

"Hi, I'm currently recruiting participants for my dissertation project on how it is experienced to provide support for a friend with social anxiety. If you are a friend of someone with social anxiety and interested in talking about your experiences of the friendship in an individual interview, please message me privately here on Facebook. Thank you!"

#### **Appendix G: Reference for amendment form**

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1991). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. London: Penguin.



## Appendix G: Example of Scan of Emergent Themes and Comments on Transcripts

Interview Taylor

providing the "right" support	693	metaphorically, when she would need kind words, and I would give	Experienced providing the "wrong" support
	694	her kind words when she actually needed to like you know be	
	695	woken up, a wakeup call, so, I don't know if it's based on my	
Experience pro. sup. for opposite sex	696	personality or if it's a difference in the sex but I think even though	Gender or personality trait? that makes him the way he is →
	697	we're equal we're still different in the way we function sometimes	
	698	because of society, like we have to, sometimes I felt like I could	
	699	have comforted her the way she needed to but I was, there was	Gender created difficulties
	700	kind of a wall because, because I was a guy and she was a girl, you	
	701	know what I mean, and that was, I didn't mention that, but there	- developing feelings
	702	was a diffi-, like there was a problem at some point in the beginning	- attraction
	703	of third year because she started developing feeling for me, feelings	
	704	for me because I was the only person that was there for her, you	
	705	know what I mean, and I knew that, I knew that there wasn't, I	
	706	knew that what she mis-, what was mistaken for like gratitude and	
	707	friendship, she was, she was mistaking the gratitude and friendship	Became so close that feelings were mixed
	708	for kind of other feelings so it was kind of hard stuff to go through	- friendship was mistaken for more romantic feeling
	709	as well, to deal with you'd say.	
	710		
	711	I: How did you deal with that?	
	712		
	713	T: At first it was easy to deal with because I wasn't in a relationship	Taylor's relationship
	714	and then when I got into a relationship I like, she went through one	
Dependency	715	of <u>her worst stages</u> because she was afraid, because I was in a	Afraid to lose him
	716	relationship, I wouldn't be there for her anymore, yeah, she was	- very dependent on him since she went through a really bad phase (similar to Ann's experience)
	717	really, really afraid of that, she was afraid that I had someone now	
	718	so she would like get in the background, but she didn't like realize,	
	719	that's what I told her, I was in a relationship but she [friend with	
	720	anxiety] was my friend so that's two different, completely different	
	721	things and for example when I was with [girlfriend] sometimes I	
	722	would put my friendship with this girl before when she was having	
	723	anxiety attacks because I knew she would need more, need me	
	724	more than my girlfriend would need me at this point, you know	
	725	what I mean, that's kind of, like I said, you're being torn between	Torn between two people - helping the one who needs immediate help

# Interview Taylor

Experience prev. exp. for opp. sex	726	two, and that can create tensions that wouldn't have been there if I	Experienced tensions - gender related? - maybe not because Ahm experienced it too.
	727	would have been a girl, you know what I mean, that's kind of the	
	728	stuff I was talking about.	
	729		
	730	I: Yeah, yeah, alright, I was thinking about something I wanted to	
	731	ask [T: Yeah tell me] but I forgot it. So I'm going to ask you	shows enthusiasm and eagerness to engage in conversation about this, also seemed very engaged from the beginning in sharing
	732	something else and then [T: Okay see if it comes back] I'll get back	
	733	to it. So, can you tell me if you experience that being friends with	
	734	someone socially anxious is different in any way to being friends	
	735	with someone who's not?	
	736		
	737	T: Well, I think it is because, it's a kind of best friend relationship	How he experience the friendship Difference between friends and acquaintances
	738	but different from the usual idea of people having a best friend,	
	739	when you're just friends it's like, I don't know how it is in Denmark	
	740	[where the interviewer comes from] but here people use friend a	
	741	bit too much, in France we use acquaintance when we know	
	742	people, I think most people, you don't know them really, you only	
	743	know the face or the mask they wear when you go outside with	
	744	them, when you go to party with them, you go to the cinema with	
<del>the</del> The nature of the friendship	745	them and stuff like that, being friend with someone with social	It is close: Like a sibling or parent-relationship <del>relationship</del>
	746	anxiety is like, is like creating a relationship that's almost like close	
	747	to something as a big brother or child, parent-child relationship, I	
	748	would say because sometimes you feel like, sometimes you have to,	
	749	sometimes you have to be there for them just like they were your	
	750	young, your younger brother or younger sister, so it's really	
Feeling responsible/ Feelings of responsibility	751	different, you feel like you, there's a word for it, you're responsible	Feeling responsible - the difference lies in this feeling as he says "you're not responsible for your friends"
	752	for them, you're not responsible for your friends, you know what I	
	753	mean, you're only responsible for your friends when they get	
	754	completely wasted and they start throwing up everywhere, that's	
	755	the kind of moments where you're responsible for them but that's	
	756	only a physical moment, with that person, my friend, it was like	not a friend but a younger sister for whom he needs to take care of - again the protector, the older, wiser responsible one
	757	feeling I was responsible for her both psychologically and physically,	
	758	so when she need support more psychologically, when she was,	

**Appendix H:** Table of Super-Ordinate and Emergent Themes for Each Participant

<b>Table 1</b> Table of super-ordinate themes in Sabrina's interview		
<b>Themes</b>	<b>Page/Line</b>	<b>Key words</b>
<i>Providing support as a group</i> Closeness of the group The group effect The use of "we" Sharing the "burden"	6.170-185 / 16.492 5.134 4.116 / 14.431-455 16.494 / 18.552-566+571 / 19.578	confidence all in it together less alone carry together
<i>The outcome of providing support</i> Feelings of responsibility A change in behaviour Not to be a burden	9.272 8.249 / 10.300-335 11.351-361	show confidence careful, strength awareness
<i>How to provide support</i> Empathising Referring to previous positive experiences Staying positive Positivity as a tool for support	3.88 / 4.97 / 13. 417 3.91 / 8.228 9.260 8.258	standing by the friend positive thoughts overcome negativity encouragement
<i>Providing the right support</i> The right support  How to be a good friend	7.212 / 14. 421 / 16.483 / 18.567 / 19.575 18.542	structure, careful, wrong/right  reflections

<b>Table 2</b> Table of super-ordinate themes in Mike's interview		
<b>Themes</b>	<b>Page/line</b>	<b>Key words</b>
<i>"It's not you, it's the anxiety"</i> A good friendship "You can't be angry with someone for feeling scared"	3.90 / 20.624 5.132 / 20.650-55 18.567	it's a condition would do the same not doing it to be spiteful

<i>Strategies for providing support</i> a) Distancing oneself Setting expectations low “Tell me in advance” – avoiding disappointment b) Promoting control Promoting independence From dependent to independent Seeing things clearly	15.478 / 18.566 18.562 19.597  8.259 / 12.409 12.384-397 6.159 / 6.184-92 17.546	being prepared avoid getting hurt avoid getting hurt  giving control providing options friendship change no blame
<i>Being the primary provider of support</i> Responsibility Dependency Worrying about seeming cold	3.76 / 4.108-25 / 5.142 5.148 / 6.165 / 15.519 9.266 6.170	no social support why me?  doesn't understand
<i>Providing the right support by drawing on own experiences</i> Providing the right support Making oneself dependent Taking control Expressing feelings	7.207 / 8.227 / 9.284 10.312 8.232 10.291 / 11.325 7.215 7.220-23 / 10.301	familiar  concerned 'she needed me' to feel better shame, embarrass

<b>Table 3</b> Table of super-ordinate themes in Taylor's interview		
<b>Themes</b>	<b>Page/line</b>	<b>Key words</b>
<i>Conflicted feelings about providing support</i> Feeling selfish Worrying about seeming selfish Managing divergent feelings towards providing support	17.528 / 31.993 15.483 / 16.497+512 5.136 / 12.373 / 31.997	torn sounds bad (not) doing enough
<i>Finding the right balance</i> Different types of support Fear of not doing enough/being sufficient Providing the “right” support Balancing providing support Facebook as a tool for support	25.822 9.268 9.268 / 13.402 21.689 10.306	kick/hug self-doubt wrong/right assessing pressure relief

<i>The value of providing support</i> Getting something in return  Realizing the importance of his role Impact of support (for the anxious friend) The provider of support Feeling needed Acknowledging his help	11.344 / 11.358 / 16.500 / 18.585 12.365 / 17.536 8.250 / 11.365 20.633 / 29.944-966 30.979 15.482	rewarding  better person immediate relief wise, older, not pro doing good thankful
<i>Experiencing feelings of responsibility</i> The responsibility of being a friend/providing support Dependency  The nature of the friendship (parent-child relationship, master-trainee)	23.751 / 26.846  4.125 / 2.39 / 5.154 / 22.715 23.746 / 24.787	responsible  the only friend  relationship
<i>Difficulties of providing support</i> Experience providing support for the opposite sex Being available/asking too much Unfairness Managing own difficulties too	21.673 / 22.696-728  14.451 13.412 9.277	gender?  expectations punching bag difficult

<b>Table 4</b> Table of super-ordinate themes in Ann's interview		
<b>Themes</b>	<b>Page/line</b>	<b>Key words</b>
<i>The impact of diagnosis on the friendship</i> Before diagnosis (negative) The positive impact of diagnosis  Gaining an understanding Acceptance	4.110+121 / 7.202 3.92 / 4.99 / 6.170 / 13.438 5.132 5.155 / 14.436	lashed out change  understanding who she is
<i>Being the 'peacekeeper': 'I've always kinda looked after her'</i> Feelings of responsibility	2.41  6.195 / 7.209 / 10.312 / 11.349	taking care  responsible

Feelings of unfairness Managing own life while providing support Receiving support to provide support	9.291 / 13.407 4.123 11.332	unfair to me exhausting, tiring twin sister
<i>Use of language</i> Use of strong expressions Simplifying own actions The use of the word 'annoying'	7.197 / 13.402 8.240 7.200 / 9.270 / 13.420	'suffocating' etc. 'just stupid things' feels bad
<i>'She never used to realize what she was doing'</i> Dependency  Asking too much Feeling limited	2.58 / 3.73 / 3.87 / 9.268 10.303 9.267 / 11.347 / 12.365 / 12.373	the only friend   constrained
<i>'It's a good friendship (...) I wouldn't change it at all'</i> Mutual support Getting something in return	12.368 / 14.446	support

<b>Table 5</b> Table of super-ordinate themes in Simon's interview		
<b>Themes</b>	<b>Page/line</b>	<b>Key words</b>
<i>Friendships go both ways</i> Expectations of a friendship Feeling used Turning the cold shoulder to avoid getting hurt	9.294-98 16.492 9.288-95 10.304-28	something in return supporting each other second best avoid getting hurt
<i>Use of language</i> "She's just being silly" – downplaying worries to provide support Strong expressions	5.154-64 / 6.179+185 11.336 / 12.383	silly, stupid etc.  hideous, tedious etc.

<i>Challenges in providing support</i> Giving advice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repeating oneself</li> <li>• Relationship worries</li> </ul> Providing an alternative perspective Doubting sincerity	12.371 6.168 / 11.338 9.265 5.156 / 6.180 / 7.207 / 15.461-69 7.220 / 11.346	pointless boring trust issues different approach  playing on it
<i>"(...) everyone has these little things that are going to annoy you"</i> A good friendship  Getting used to the way people are More than socially anxious	2.57 / 3.88-96 / 4.107 / 15.487 4.117-20 5.142	SA is not a strain  who he is everyone's got issues

## Appendix I: Reflection

This study positioned itself within social constructionism, which affected how the themes of the analysis were interpreted. A specific example of social constructionism's influence on the interpretation is: Participants expressed how they felt responsible for their friends, however, I interpreted that they also took on a lot of the responsibility themselves. They were thus contributing to the construction of their own reality, their own responsibility and their own role as the primary provider of support. I interpreted that the responsibility experienced were constructed in the interaction between participants' and their socially anxious friend, for example, when the socially anxious friend told participants that "you are the only real friend I've got", participants started thinking of and portraying themselves as the only friend. When speaking to me in an interview, participants created and upheld this understanding of themselves when telling me that they were the only friend and provider of support. Thus, analytic themes were created and interpreted with an understanding of how the social processes between people, whether that would be participants and their friends, or the interviewer and the interviewee, constructs and creates the reality of the participants.

My position within social constructionism also played a part in the definition of social anxiety. The study did purposely not request that participants whose friends were socially anxious were formally (clinically) diagnosed with social anxiety. The study welcomed participants whose friends had self-identified as someone with social anxiety. This was chosen as I understood the informal self-identification as just as influential on the individual's everyday life, social situations, and relationships as a formal clinical diagnosis. The way individuals perceive themselves and maintain their reality through language and interaction with others, becomes the individuals' social reality.

I chose this topic out of interest based on previous experiences. As I have previously worked as a youth counsellor, I have experienced that social anxiety, or anxiety in all its shapes and forms, is a recurring disorder or condition in young people's lives. More and more young people came to me talking about their experience of pressure from school and university, pressure to achieve good grades, good looks, a relevant job, being a good boyfriend/girlfriend etc. I often advised the young people to seek help or turn to support in family or friends, sharing the difficulties with someone they trusted. These experiences inspired me to look into the phenomenon. However, as a lot of research was already carried out on the experience of being socially anxious, I wished to look elsewhere. I chose to look at friends because I assumed that in understanding how it is experienced to be friends with someone socially anxious, I could bring new knowledge to the field, which could benefit both the socially anxious young people and their friends. I wished to understand if friends experienced challenges and difficulties in this friendship, and how much socially anxious people actually relied upon their friends. This study reflected these wishes and findings demonstrated that friends do experience challenges because socially anxious people rely upon their help, but also that the friendships are valued by both parties. Thus, I think this research can actually



benefit the field, benefit the friends (perhaps as they realize they are not alone in feeling responsible, experiencing challenges and handling self-blame) and also the socially anxious young people (perhaps as they realize that their friends experience difficulties but at the same time would not want to be without the friendship).

#### **Appendix J:** Table of Super-Ordinate Themes and Subthemes for All Participants

<b>Table 6</b> First table of themes for the group		
Super-ordinate themes	Subthemes	Page/Line
<b>Experiences of responsibility in providing support</b>	<i>A) Feeling responsible</i>	
	<b>Taylor:</b> "You feel like (...) you're responsible for them"	23.751-752
	<b>Ann:</b> "I've always kinda looked after her"	2.41
	<b>Sabrina:</b> "I feel like I can't let myself panic too much or completely break down in front of her"	9.273
	<b>Mike:</b> "I was thinking sometimes why, why is it my job to do this and why is it my responsibility"	16.517-519
	<i>B) Primary provider of support</i>	
	<b>Taylor:</b> "I was kind of the only friend she had"	2.39-40
	<b>Ann:</b> "I'm like the only real friend she's got"	3.77-78
	<b>Sabrina:</b> "It's good to have another person like to, like it's always better when there are several people in case one of us makes a mistake" / "It's good to have another person there to help I think"	19.565-567
	<b>Mike:</b> "Therapy only works if you still have support outside of therapy, which (...) she didn't have a lot of the time, which meant (...) I had to act as if I was a therapist"	19.575-576
		5.142-145
	<i>C) Dependency</i>	
	<b>Taylor:</b> "When I got into a relationship (...) she went through one of her worst stages because she was afraid (...) I wouldn't be there for her anymore, yeah, she was really, really afraid of that"	22.714-717
	<b>Ann:</b> "I wouldn't get any time to myself (...) she'd always want to be around me"	6.184-186
	<b>Simon:</b> "Sometimes I'm like: here we go again, what do you want me to do now"	12.369-370

	<b>Mike:</b> "It used to be that she was almost completely dependent (...) I'd have to talk her through everything"	
<b>Making sense of the challenges in providing support</b>	<p><i>A) Challenging feelings of providing support</i></p> <p><b>Taylor:</b> "She wouldn't know if she was like asking too much or not"</p> <p><b>Ann:</b> "She wanted me all to herself, it was quite hard, like having to shut other friends out just to keep her happy"</p> <p><b>Sabrina:</b> "I did have to like overcome my personal negative thoughts to like encourage the others I guess. So it was challenging for me"</p> <p><b>Simon:</b> "You're just using me while your boyfriend's at work (...) or for a shoulder when things are going wrong"</p> <p><b>Mike:</b> "I didn't talk to her for a few days after because I was so, so pissed off with her for, you know, letting me down, I don't have to put up with this stuff with my other friends"</p>	<p>14.454-455</p> <p>11.346-348</p> <p>9.288-290</p> <p>9.294-295</p> <p>17.544-546</p>
	<p><i>B) Strategies for protecting oneself while providing support</i></p> <p><b>Taylor:</b> "I thought I'm not going to be a punching bag, so I remember like kind of taking my distance from her"</p> <p><b>Ann:</b> "We had it all out and she was like she apologised that she always took everything out on me"</p> <p><b>Simon:</b> "I wasn't really messaging her at all" / "If I give someone the cold shoulder they can usually tell"</p> <p><b>Mike:</b> "Before I saw her I had to distance myself first" / "I'm setting my expectations low 'cause I will end up getting disappointed"</p>	<p>13.414-416</p> <p>7.201-203</p> <p>10.306-307/326</p> <p>15.478-479</p> <p>19.619-620</p>
	<p><i>C) Worrying about seeming cold, selfish or rude</i></p> <p><b>Taylor:</b> "When I say that I just feel selfish, you know, when I say that it brings something, it's rewarding"</p> <p><b>Ann:</b> "It was quite annoying. Like not, like I feel bad, not annoying but do you know what I mean, just tired"</p> <p><b>Simon:</b> "Sometimes I feel like I don't know if, like it's just, I don't know if she plays on it, sort of thing, maybe that's a bit rude to say"</p> <p><b>Mike:</b> "It's going to make me seem pretty cold but I, I just couldn't understand"</p>	<p>31.993-994</p> <p>13.420-421</p> <p>7.219-221</p> <p>6.170-171</p>
	<p><i>D) Wanting to provide the right support (fear of not doing enough, can use "use of language" here – it's silly, repeating oneself, Taylor)</i></p> <p><b>Taylor:</b> "You're afraid you're not going to say the right thing, you don't want to make it worse"</p> <p><b>Ann:</b> "I didn't know where to go from"</p> <p><b>Sabrina:</b> "We have to look after staying positive and</p>	<p>9.268-269</p> <p>4.121-122</p> <p>18.573-575</p>

	<p>encouraging otherwise it will go wrong”</p> <p><b>Simon:</b> “I can’t be bothered giving my advice ‘cause it’s pointless, every time I give my advice it doesn’t even go anywhere anyway”</p> <p><b>Mike:</b> “I’m always concerned that if I’m doing too much then that’s not her doing it for herself”</p>	<p>12.371-373</p> <p>8.232-233</p>
<b>The meaning of providing support</b>	<p><i>A) “It’s not you, it’s the anxiety”</i></p> <p><b>Ann:</b> “Everyone has their own issues, things like that, I think it’s just once you both know that it is actual like social anxiety and it is an actual, it is a problem, it’s a lot easier to work with”</p> <p><b>Sabrina:</b> “Maybe she wouldn’t have shared that aspect of her personality if she was in a bigger group of people”</p> <p><b>Simon:</b> “I don’t want to try to look all her behaviours and think ‘oh it’s because she’s socially anxious” / “Everyone has these little things that are going to annoy you”</p> <p><b>Mike:</b> “It’s not her that I have a problem with, it’s the fact that she has a condition” / “I’m not friends with her because of her anxiety, I’m friends with her in spite of that.”</p>	<p>14.436-439</p> <p>12.368.370</p> <p>5.143-145</p> <p>20.623-624</p> <p>21.655-657</p>
	<p><i>B) A mutual friendship (a friendship is both ways)</i></p> <p><b>Taylor:</b> “It’s both ways, I think it’s mutual, you know, even if some people say: ‘oh I’ve been there for them and they’ve never like given me anything in return’, that’s not true because if it was true, they wouldn’t have stuck, you know, around, you only do that because you get something in return”</p> <p><b>Ann:</b> “It’s a good friendship (...) I wouldn’t change it at all”</p> <p><b>Sabrina:</b> “We both have a lot of things in common and we just got on really well since the beginning so I just feel really grateful for our friendship”</p> <p><b>Simon:</b> “Sometimes it’s an annoyance (...) but it doesn’t make our friendship difficult because if it made our friendship difficult I probably wouldn’t be friends with them” / “A friendship should be two ways, I should (...) provide you support and you should provide me support”</p> <p><b>Mike:</b> “If she was having these panic attacks (...) and she still wasn’t a good friend then, then I wouldn’t bother”</p>	<p>16.500-504</p> <p>14.449-450</p> <p>1.22-24</p> <p>15.485-488</p> <p>21.653-655</p> <p>10.296-297</p>
	<p><i>C) The positive effect of being a provider of support</i></p> <p><b>Taylor:</b> “When she realized as well how much I had been helping her and I think, even if it sounds bad in a way, I think that’s very rewarding”</p>	<p>16.496-498</p>
	<i>D) A close friendship</i>	

	<b>Taylor:</b> "They're your friend but you see them as something else as well (...) almost like a family member" <b>Ann:</b> "It was just a very intense friendship (...) not in a bad way but we were just super, super, super close" <b>Sabrina:</b> "I feel like I've known her all my life" <b>Mike:</b> "We're close, we talk every day"	24.763-765 3.66-68 2.39 2.37-38
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